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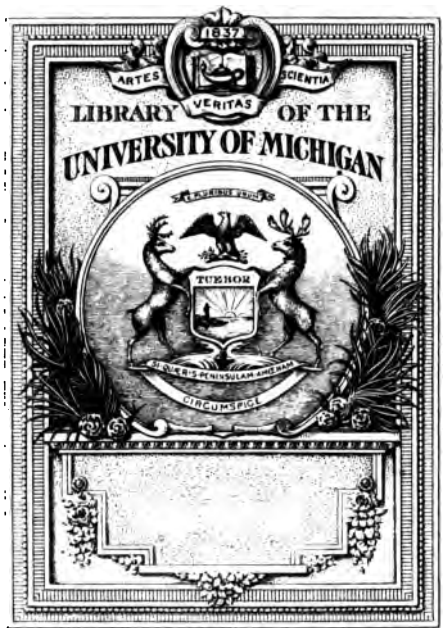

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TRADE UNIONISM AND BRITISH INDUSTRY

TRADE UNIONISM AND BRITISH INDUSTRY

A REPRINT OF "THE TIMES" ARTICLES ON "THE CRISIS IN BRITISH INDUSTRY"

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY EDWIN A. PRATT

LONDON
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CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	1
"CA' CANNY"	21
THE BUILDING TRADES	28
EFFECT ON HOUSE PROPERTY	40
THE ENGINEERING TRADES	43
BOILERMAKING AND SHIPBUILDING	50
IRONFOUNDING	59
THE SOUTH METROPOLITAN GAS COMPANY	62
BOOT AND SHOE TRADES	65
RAILWAY WORKERS	71
THE TRAINING OF BOYS	76
PLATE-GLASS BEVELLERS	79
PLATE-GLASS AND SHEET-GLASS	83
THE YORKSHIRE GLASS BOTTLE TRADE	84
THE BLACK BOTTLE TRADE	88

PAGE

THE FLINT-GLASS TRADE 94

THE BIRMINGHAM BRASS TRADES 109

THE BIRMINGHAM TINPLATE TRADE . . . 114

GUNMAKERS AND TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION . . 121

SHEFFIELD TRADES 126

BRITANNIA-METAL SMITHS 131

SILVERSMITHS 134

THE CUTLERY TRADES 135

THE RAZOR TRADE 137

THE SAW TRADE 138

EDGE TOOLS 139

FILE-MAKING 140

THE FUTURE OF THE SHEFFIELD TRADES . . 142

THE PRINTING TRADES 148

THE FURNITURE TRADES 162

THE GOLD-BEATING INDUSTRY AND GERMAN COMPETITION 167

SOME MISCELLANEOUS EXAMPLES 172

AN IRONMASTER'S EXPERIENCES 181

PAGE

American Methods 185

Whither "Go Easy" is Leading . . . 192

A British Seaport under Trade Union Rule . 195

Aggressive Trade Unionism out of Date . . 198

Employers' Benefit Funds 201

A Trade Union Reform Movement . . . 203

The Employers' Policy of Self-Defence . . 208

Industrial Training 212

Employers' Combinations 214

Trade Union Provident Funds . . . 218

The Board of Trade and its Labour Department 221

Index 239

INTRODUCTION

THREE letters recently published in *The Times* have suggested to me the desirability of re-printing, at the present juncture, the series of articles which I contributed to the columns of that journal between November 18, 1901, and January 16, 1902, under the title of "The Crisis in British Industry." The letters in question (the first of which appeared on October 13, and the two others on October 21, 1903) are as follows:—

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

SIR,—The whole country is ringing with proposed changes in our fiscal policy designed to stimulate and increase our trade. These objects cannot be attained except by means of successful competition with our foreign rivals. How can we compete with them successfully? By modifying or abandoning our system of free imports and by preferential tariffs, so it is said. This is a political answer, and is based upon theory only as yet. But it has a worse fault. It ignores a more formidable obstacle to the maintenance and improvement of British trade than our own and foreign tariff systems combined. This obstacle does not depend upon fiscal policy at all.

It exists now and will still exist, whatever alterations be made in that policy.

What is the obstacle? It is the fact that the cost of production in many of our great industries is higher than the cost of production in the same industries abroad. Why is this the case? There are at least three causes. First, the cost of living is more for working men here than it is abroad. Secondly, foreigners work more days a year and more hours a day than we do. Thirdly, the English working man's working hours are too often more nominal than real. So long as these three causes remain unremedied it is idle to hope to be able to hold our own with foreign trade.

Even if we assume that fiscal changes would slightly increase the cost of living to foreign workmen, they could not possibly have any effect upon the second and third of these causes. But we have remedies at hand if we would only use them.

In the first place, our working men must make up their minds to have the common honesty to do a fair day's work for their daily wage. At present, in spite of all the indignant denials and hysterical disclaimers of trade union officials, restriction of output is widely practised.

Restriction of output is pure protection, and yet our trade unions are all for free trade. Beautiful consistency! Restriction is not only a dishonest commercial policy which converts labour into a band of organised thieves, but it is suicidal to the working man, because it drives trade from the country. This practice is well known to all familiar with our great industries, and even to some politicians, but they, of course, dare not refer to the evil.

In the second place, when the trade unions have abandoned restriction of output and the engineering of labour disputes at home, they must employ their energies

and funds in improving the organisation of foreign labour. By adopting this course they will encourage their trade rivals in their demands for shorter hours and better wages. These demands will succeed as they did here. Then the foreign manufacturer's cost of production must, and will, rise, which means that his competitive power will decrease. British trade would reap the benefit.

The remedies here advocated are simple and practical, and can be tried without inquiry, political campaign, or Act of Parliament. They would be tried to-morrow but for the crass stupidity of the British workman, who is content to follow the blind leading of his unions. The effects of his folly are becoming so serious to the country generally that they cannot be allowed to continue. We have arrived at a point where we must not only recognise this truth, but fearlessly state it, however disagreeable it may be to the wire-pullers of party politics. The working classes have no monopoly either of political or commercial wisdom, and they are making use of their power in a way so detrimental to their country's trade that a period must be put to their harmful tactics, and that right soon.

A class which works nine hours a day at the outside, and thinks it can compete with its foreign rivals who work at least ten hours a day, is committing a gross error. The outcry for aid to our commerce shows that we feel the result of our labour policy; but instead of blaming the working men we blame foreign tariffs, and our own free import system.

What typical insular logic!

Yours truly,

AN HONEST LABOURER.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE,
October 9.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

SIR,—May I call attention to an aspect of the fiscal question which seems to me to have been more or less overlooked in the heat of the controversy? There are, I suppose, two aims or motives, with one or both of which we all enter upon the inquiry; they are by no means identical, nor do they run on parallel lines. One is the consolidation of the Empire, the other the improvement of our industrial trade.

As regards the first, many of us are awaiting the statement of some scheme which shall be mutually advantageous to the mother country and all the colonies alike, and which will be accepted by all. Hitherto not even the outline of a scheme fulfilling all these conditions has been put forth.

The aspect to which I refer, however, has to do with the second aim—*viz.* the improvement or revival of our trade. Assuming that trade is in a languishing condition, can legislation, or protection, or any fiscal enactment, alone restore it to prosperity? I fear not; the antecedent necessity is persistent industry, and there is reason to fear that the industry of the United Kingdom is "sore let and hindered" by the restrictive policy of the trade unions. The essential corollary of free trade is free labour, whereas we have free imports and protected labour.

The two trades with which I may claim some personal acquaintance are the printing and building trades, and it is matter of common knowledge that in them too frequently the best and the quickest worker is not allowed to reap the fruits of his skill and industry. Tariffs act like a handicap in a game, which may equalise two players of known skill who may be relied upon to do their best, but is powerless to make a shirker "play up and play the game."

Were true industry, with its concomitants of thrift, sobriety, and freedom from gambling, to prevail, I for one believe that the British workman could hold his own, and more than hold his own, against the world—protection or no protection. I do not presume to say that protection is ineffectual; I only say that protection without genuine industry is like a besieged fortress without a garrison.

I yield to no one in appreciation of the great work accomplished by trade unions, but I submit that their policy of restriction of output and of individual effort is doing more injury to the industrial trade of this country than foreign tariffs. Trade unionism in America and in Germany, so far as I can ascertain, enforces no such restrictions as prevail over here. I hope that some of our leading men will deal with this question; combined with the efforts which are now being made for amended education, a genuine effort to free the individual worker from the shackles in which he now works cannot fail to have most important results.

I know that from a political point of view the subject is a thorny one to touch; but if the true facts of the case could be dispassionately laid before the mass of English workmen, it is impossible to believe that they could fail to see in which direction their interests lie.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

JOHN MURRAY.

50, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.,
October 20.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

SIR,—The successful endeavour to make our fiscal system a matter of party politics has prevented the direct discussion of some of the aspects of the question by politicians. They are unwilling to attribute the

diminution of our foreign trade to the action of trade unions, and so a large part of the cause of the diminution remains unmentioned and unattended to. I refer to the practice of restriction of output, which I think is largely responsible for our inability to compete with the harder-working foreigner. Under these circumstances protection has been determined on as a means of keeping off competition.

The Times' investigation proved that our workmen are content to do just enough work to keep a factory in a position to carry on its business, and that, though denied by prominent trade unionists, there exists a tacit but clearly understood intention on the workmen's part to turn out no more than that amount. This policy has been represented to the men as altruistic as well as advantageous; it is also welcome to all who are idle by nature.

Now of all other trade union questions this one is at any rate answered in a totally different spirit by Continental and American people. There we find piecework, and systems designed to make hard work and increased output profitable to the individual workman are allowed; and hence it tends at any rate, to come about that the foreigners have surplus goods to sell at a profit outside their home market. This is not overproduction by any means. Their unrestricted output gives a surplus of goods which is used to turn the balance against us, and, reacting, to discourage our manufacturers and make them unwilling to put down new plant or sink capital in factories.

So protection is the cure pressed on us; but is there no danger that this also will be turned to account to further restrict output, and will only leave us with higher prices to the home consumer and no foreign markets invaded? Our workmen, enjoying free cheap imports and

the advantage of cheap capital, ought as it is to be able to undersell the taxed foreigner, and I believe they could but for the bad advice of their leaders.

A member of the present Cabinet was asked if a little elementary political economy might be taught in our schools; but his answer was that the whole body of trade unionists would be up in arms against it. I suggest education on the fallacy of the doctrine of restriction of output as a cure for the state of affairs which has brought about the fiscal crisis.

Yours faithfully,

E. BAYNES BADCOCK.

7, PEMBRIDGE CRESCENT, W.,
October 15.

At the time my articles were written there was, of course, no suggestion that Mr. Chamberlain would raise a "crisis" in the country in regard to the fiscal question—a question which, as Mr. John Murray points out in the letter quoted above, involves the twofold aspect of the consolidation of the Empire and the improvement of our industrial trade. It is with the latter that we are here specially concerned, and, looking back to the tour of inquiry which I made in the autumn of 1901 with the view of collecting materials for the articles in question, I am struck by the fact that although manufacturers great and small, representing a large variety of different trades in various parts of the country, discussed their grievances with me, it was only on very

rare occasions that reference was made by them to fiscal difficulties and the need for protection, and then only incidentally. It will be seen that, in giving an account of the "Sheffield Trades," I remarked, "One hears the same story of a steady decadence and a transfer of more or less of the trade into the hands of foreign competitors"; and I went on to say, "For this result hostile tariffs are undoubtedly responsible to a certain extent, but there are various characteristics and peculiarities of the trades in question that render them especially deserving of study." This was the key-note in regard not only to the Sheffield trades but to many others as well, and the general impression then undoubtedly seemed to be that if British manufacturers were not so hampered by labour conditions they would, as a rule—though exceptions were freely admitted—be able to hold their own in spite of foreign competition.

It may be that in 1901, before Mr. Chamberlain had brought forward his array of facts, figures, and arguments, the country had not sufficiently realised the effects of hostile tariffs; and it may also be thought in some quarters that my articles erred in not giving greater emphasis to this aspect of the question. If so, I can only plead that I presented the aforesaid grievances as I

found them. To-day the tendency is to go to the other extreme, and to attribute the troubles that have overtaken British industry and British commerce to fiscal causes alone. In regard to the glass trades, for instance, speeches have been made, leaflets have been issued, and numberless letters have been written to the newspapers (especially those in the Midlands), tracing to hostile tariffs and foreign competition the closing of so many glass-works in this country, and the depression that has come over the British glass industries in general. But if the reader will turn to the sections dealing with the glass trades, and see what I relate as to the difficulties manufacturers have had to face in dealing with their workpeople, he will cease to wonder that so many of them have come to grief, and he will understand the more readily how the prevalence of such conditions as those described must have facilitated the operations of the foreigner in gaining the position on our markets he has now secured.

If further evidence on this aspect of the question be needed, I would commend for consideration the following paragraph from *The Times* of November 19, 1903, in regard to the Penrhyn Quarry strike—a dispute in which the main point at issue was whether the real control of

the quarry should be in the hands of Lord Penrhyn or in those of the trade union leaders:

A correspondent writes:—"It is estimated that the Penrhyn Quarry strike, which ended last week after lasting three years, although all the men were not out during that period, cost the district the sum of £364,000 in wages alone. An alarming fact has come to light in connection with the dispute. Before the strike, which began in October, 1900, the amount of slates imported into this country might almost be regarded as a negligible quantity. For the quarter ended March, 1901, the quantity of slates imported into this country amounted to 15,702 tons, and for the quarter ended September 30, the figures reached a total of 31,581 tons. The figures show a steady and alarming increase, and it is feared that the slate trade of North Wales has been permanently injured by the strike."

The facts here narrated represent only one of many instances that might be given showing the way in which trade has left the country as the direct result of industrial warfare, and no possible policy of tariff reform could by itself have prevented such grave injury to the trades concerned.

There is, indeed, abundant food for reflection in the problem as to whether the imposition of tariffs on foreign commodities in the interests of British industries would or would not add to the complications of any labour dispute arising in such industries. Presumably the purchasers

of slates in this country did not themselves suffer from the stoppage of the Penrhyn supplies, because their wants were readily met from abroad; but, taking this Penrhyn dispute as an illustration, I would invite the reader to ask himself this question: Assuming for the sake of argument that there had been a tariff on foreign slates, what effect would the existence of such a tariff have had on the position of (*a*) the strikers, (*b*) Lord Penrhyn, and (*c*) the purchasers of slates, respectively? And what effect, also, would similar conditions and circumstances be likely to have on other industries if we are to think only of tariff reform, and ignore the equally important factor of labour reform?

As Mr. John Murray truly enough says in his letter, "from a political point of view the subject is a thorny one to touch." Each party to the present controversy wants, as an ordinary matter of tactics, the support of the working-classes, and it is only natural that neither should care to press home too closely considerations which might in any way alienate from it the sympathies and support of the trade unionists. There is, consequently, the danger that if the country is to be influenced exclusively by the views of political leaders and lieutenants, it may not get at the whole of the truths it ought to

have if "the inquest of the nation" is to result in a sufficiently comprehensive verdict.

The time seems, therefore, to be especially opportune for the re-publication, in collected form, of a series of articles in which there was brought together so large an array of facts bearing on the questions of the restriction of output, the increased cost of production, the resort to picketing, intimidation, and coercion, and the general effect of the more militant and unreasonable phases of trade union rules or practices in handicapping British industries. No one can deny the bearing of all these things on the present controversy, and if they are to remain unchecked the most thorough-going system of fiscal changes that even Mr. Chamberlain could bring about would not suffice to re-establish our industries and our commerce on so healthy and so prosperous a basis as they ought to occupy.

The articles in question were originally published at a time when a good deal of attention was already being paid to the questions dealt with therein. Between October 7, 1901, and November 18, when the first article appeared, Professor Case, Mr. W. Bramwell Booth, Mr. T. V. S. Angier, Mr. Henry Wilson, Mr. George T. Hartley, Mr. C. R. Ashbee, and others, had taken part in a discussion in the columns

of *The Times* on labour problems in general, the said discussion being started by a letter headed "The Crisis in Labour" from Professor Case, in which he showed, among other things, how the effect on capital of the existing labour conditions was "partly its gradual destruction and diversion from this country, but still more the less-noticed decrease in its productiveness. We reckon," he said, "our national capital by millions, and often congratulate ourselves on its increase, but forget that a million now means much less in the way of interest. For example, the problem of railway directors at the present moment is how to save out of a *maximum* of wages a *minimum* of dividend." A still more vigorous discussion followed the publication of the articles. The defence of trade unionism "as an institution" was taken up by Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Webb in a letter published in *The Times* on December 6, 1901; though the object of the articles was, in point of fact, not to attack trade unionism "as an institution," but to deal, rather, with the abuses that had crept into an organisation which, in the opinion of many employers, should occupy a legitimate and even useful place in the scheme of industrial progress, so long as it is directed along reasonable lines. Mr. and Mrs. Webb admitted that,

"so far as they relate to the instinctive sentiment of a manual working class, employed at time wages, we believe that your correspondent's charges contain much truth"; but they held it wrong to think that the evil of "go-easy" and kindred practices was increasing, or was due to trade unionism. "So far," they wrote, "from the aggregate product being less per head and decreasing, we are convinced, on the evidence of employers themselves, that greater sobriety, greater regularity, increased intelligence, and improved methods of remuneration make the manual labour of this country (irrespective of the results of machinery) far more productive to-day than it ever was before." They further declared that "at the present time the influence of trade unionism, considered as a whole, is more efficacious in increasing than in reducing the productivity of the labour of its members." On December 20, 1901, a further statement for the defence, signed by the Management Committee (sixteen in number) of the General Federation of Trade Unions, was published in *The Times*. It set forth, mainly, "the legitimate objects of trade unionism, and their achievements on behalf of labour and in the interests of the community generally," and, without going into details, it made the general statement that the Manage-

ment Committee "emphatically denied that the practices alleged by *The Times* writer form any part of trade unionism." On the question of restriction of output it said that "the unions oppose sweating of labour by unscrupulous employers, and resent their members being goaded into abnormal exertion beyond their strength and inconsistent with health and permanent efficiency"; and it was added, "The statement that the unions have prevented the introduction of labour-saving machinery or appliances is not only not true, but absolutely the reverse of truth." The former of these two last-mentioned assertions—as to the unions resenting their men being goaded into abnormal exertion beyond their strength—was distinctly entertaining, in view, for example, of the remarks I had made concerning the alleged number of bricks laid by London County Council bricklayers—remarks which a committee of the London County Council took four months to investigate, and then, but for a mere quibble as to the actual figure (the addition to which of another score or so would not have altered the main argument) practically admitted to be true. As regards the question of labour-saving machinery, a denial of any suggestion that the unions have prevented the introduction of such machinery does not

meet the whole of the case, because it was part of my argument that, even when labour-saving machinery had been introduced, there was too often a disposition either not to work it to its full capacity, or, alternatively, to allow one man to look after one machine only, or a strictly limited number of machines (some of which, being really automatic, required practically no minding at all); with the result that the employers got less return for their outlay than they ought to have, and the cost of production, even with the use of American machinery, was greater in this country than it would be in America itself.

Other criticisms to which the articles were subjected related chiefly to matters of detail in regard to which particular statements were challenged; though it seems to me that a much more effective reply on the general question might have been made if the critics had carried the war into the camp of the employers, by showing from the abundant evidence procurable from consular reports that, whatever the particular faults and short-comings of the men and their leaders, the depression which had overtaken British industry was due in no small degree to a lack both of enterprise and of efficient methods in the pushing of business in

foreign countries. What is now wanted, however, is not an exchange of recriminations, but a recognition of the fact that the trade and commerce of the United Kingdom must henceforward be conducted on lines that will allow of their fullest possible development if the general progress of the country is to be secured in the face of so much foreign competition. Whether the conditions described in the following pages are due directly, indirectly, or not at all to trade union rules or practices becomes itself a matter of detail from the standpoint of the total volume of our national trade, on which, however, as everybody must see, they cannot fail to have a prejudicial effect; and trade union leaders who disown all responsibility for such conditions ought to be the first to do all they can to get rid of them, if for no other reason than to ensure a greater demand for the labour of those they lead. Yet the adverse conditions which, from one cause or another, have overtaken so many of our industries are such that it would be unwise to expect any immediate substantial expansion in the amount of available employment, whatever the nature of the changes it may still be possible to effect.

In any case, however, it is now especially desirable that employers and employed should

recognise more clearly their community of interest, and seek to promote both their own and the national welfare by freeing the industries and the commerce of the land as far as possible from every restraint or difficulty that may in any way retard their proper development. This need will remain, whatever view may be taken of Mr. Chamberlain's proposals; and it will still remain whether those proposals are carried out or not. On this point one cannot insist too strongly. Whatever political leaders may or may not be able to do, there is much that employers and employed can and should accomplish, on their own initiative, in the way of putting their mutual relations on a better footing, and no more favourable opportunity for bringing about such a result could be found than the present moment, when the whole of our economic conditions are supposed to be under review. Considering that, on the one hand, the most prudent of the trade unionists of the country are opposed to the more intolerant, coercive, and restrictive tactics which have been resorted to from time to time in their name; and that, on the other hand, the great bulk of the employers are either willing to work in harmony with the trade unions—so long as they are not operated on aggressive lines,—

or, while not giving "official" recognition to the unions, make no distinction between trade unionists and others, there ought to be full scope for arriving at some understanding which would so far improve the general industrial position as either to decrease the need for tariff reform, if no fiscal changes are to be made, or else to clear the way for greater and more successful efforts, on the part alike of manufacturers and workmen, if the proposed revolution in our economic position be really effected.

EDWIN A. PRATT.

LONDON,
November, 1903.

TRADE UNIONISM AND BRITISH INDUSTRY

"CA' CANNY"

THE injurious effect that trade unionism of the more aggressive or of the more insidious type may exercise on the trade of the country is a question of very grave importance at a time when there seem to be so many difficulties in the conduct of our industries, especially in regard to the cost of production and to foreign competition. There may have been a falling off recently in the number of labour conflicts of the more violent type, once comparatively common. But against this apparent improvement must be set the further considerations that there are industries still suffering from a loss of trade transferred to other countries as the result of trade union action in the past; that there are employers of labour who, weary of stoppages of work, submit to the exactions of trade unions rather than fight against them, and pass the financial consequences on to the

British public; and, most serious of all, perhaps, that the "new" unionism, with its resort to violence and intimidation, has in turn been succeeded by a "newer" unionism, which, although working along much quieter lines, is doing even more serious injury—by reason of the greater difficulty of coping with it—alike to trade, to industry, and to the individual worker.

This "newer" unionism would pass among economists under the courtesy title of "restricting the output." Among trade unionists of the Socialist type, who have no regard for courtesy titles, it is better known as "Ca' canny." It got this nickname during the shipping troubles of a few years ago, and an exposition of its principles was given in an illustrated article published in the *Seamen's Chronicle* of October 24, 1896:

> What (asked the article) is Ca' canny? It is a simple and handy phrase which is used to describe a new instrument or policy which may be used by the workers in place of a strike. If two Scotsmen are walking together, and one walks too quickly for the other, he says to him, "Ca' canny, mon, ca' canny," which means, "Go easy, man, go easy."

Then the article, in a series of arguments, went on to show how, when a person buys a hat, a shirt, or a piece of beef, he gets an inferior article or a less quantity for a lower price, and

it argued that the same principle should apply in regard to work and wages. It concluded:

> If the employers persist in their refusal to meet the workmen's representatives in order to discuss the demands sent in, the workmen can retort by marking the ballot paper in favour of adopting the "Ca' canny," or "Go easy," policy until such times as the employers decide to meet and confer with the men's representatives.

The illustrations accompanying the article are four in number, and are given under the heading "Ca' canny. How to work for—" the different rates of pay specified. "£5 a Month" shows a seaman putting all his energy into pulling a rope; with "£4 a Month" a second man has to be called in; with "£3 10*s.* a Month" there are three men at the rope, two of them smoking their pipes and looking the picture of indifference; while "£3 a Month" shows four men, all asleep on deck, with the rope dangling loose between them.

Such is the principle of "Ca' canny," or otherwise of "restricting the output," which is the fundamental principle of the "newer" unionism. But the use of it "in place of a strike" is only one phase of the application of the principle. For quite a different reason, "Go easy" is to become the policy of the British working man in general. That, at least, is the

aspiration of the Socialist labour leaders of to-day. Men are not to put forth their best powers. They must work in such a way that it will be necessary for others to be called in to help on the work they would otherwise get through themselves, employment being thus found for the largest possible number of hands. The idea has found favour with a vast number of British workers, partly out of consideration for non-workers, and partly because it may suit their natural disposition. But in its original inception there was much more in it than this. It was hoped to "absorb" all the unemployed in the course of time, not by the laudable and much-to-be-desired means of increasing the volume of trade, and hence, also, the amount of work to be done, but simply by obtaining employment for a larger number of persons on such work as there was already. The motive of this aspiration, however, was not one of philanthropy pure and simple. When all the unemployed had been absorbed, the workers would have the employers entirely at their mercy, and would be able to command such wages and such terms as they might think fit. The general adoption of the eight hours system was to bring in a certain proportion of the unemployed; if there were still too many left

the eight hours system was to be followed by a six hours system; while if, within the six, or eight, or any other term of hours, every one took things easy and did as little work as he conveniently could, still more openings would be found for the remaining unemployed, and still better would be the chances for the Socialist propaganda. That such a "restriction" of individual output as was involved in all this would send up the cost of production to an extent that would endanger industries, and drive trade out of the country, was a matter of secondary importance, in comparison with the result that the Socialists would eventually become masters of the situation, and be able to nationalise or municipalise whatever they thought fit.

There is only too much reason to fear that, without seeing the full significance of the movement, the working men of this country are adopting the "ca' canny," or "go easy," principle so generally, that this mischief, aided by the more aggressive forms of trade unionism, is eating the very heart out of British industry. It is not a question whether or not a man is working full time—whatever the precise limit of that time may be—but, "Is he working with his full energy?" and the answer is that, though

there is a universal desire for a fair day's pay (and more, if it can be got), there is an almost universal unwillingness, among those who are subject to trade union influence, to do a fair day's work. A man may be employed and paid for ten hours, but there is a steadily growing disposition to put into those ten hours only eight hours' real effort, while those engaged for eight hours will give only six hours of their energy, and so on. From trades of the most varied description the same story comes. Not that all who adopt the principle do so willingly. There are innumerable instances of men anxious to do their best who are compelled by their fellows to do as little as they, being so treated that they are forced to abandon any idea of doing their duty to their employer, and of obeying the dictates of their own conscience. Neither is it of much use to search among union rules for evidence in black and white of the formal adoption and enforcement of a principle which has thus become the bane of our industrial system. The average trade unionist is much too 'cute a person to offer evidence against himself in this way, even though the *Seamen's Chronicle* did, in popular parlance, "give away the show." The more prominent leaders would, of course, disavow the principle; but, though they may

not encourage it openly, they do so tacitly, and their subordinates, "shop delegates," and others, do so directly. The whole system, as now being worked, is, in fact, the direct outcome of trade unionism coupled with advanced Socialism. In its mildest phase it takes the form of keeping the strong, efficient, and willing worker down to the productive level of the weakest and most inefficient; and in its worst aspect it amounts to deliberate cheating—that is to say, a man accepts wages as the price of his whole capacity and energy, and gives only a half or two-thirds of them in return.

THE BUILDING TRADES

In no branch of industry, perhaps, has this principle of restricting the output been more generally adopted than in that represented by the building trades. There are other conditions existing in those trades which demand attention as well, but the "go easy" policy calls for first consideration. Not that the rules of the men's societies prescribe any such policy. It is a question of unwritten law, discussed by the men when their lodge meetings are over, rather than of formal rules drawn up at those meetings themselves. The actual rules may, indeed, look as innocent as the multiplication table; but when one comes to the question of practices that is quite a different matter. For instance, there is no rule as to the precise number of bricks a man shall lay in the course of his day's labour; but there is a well-recognised unwritten law on the subject which a bricklayer will disregard at his peril. Twenty years ago a bricklayer would lay his 1,000 bricks a day when on

straightforward work. Thirty years ago the bricklayers employed on railway tunnel work in London laid even 1,200 a day. But the unwritten law now in force declares that a bricklayer engaged even on plain work must "go easy," and not lay more than 400 in the day. He will thus not only avoid compelling those who do not wish to do more to go faster, but he will "give another man a chance," by helping to render it necessary for more hands to be engaged.

What happens if he should exceed this quantity is shown by a story which is given on the authority of a master builder. At one of his jobs a new hand who possessed all the energy of youth was one day put on, and he showed himself so devoted to his work that the other bricklayers were dissatisfied, and counted up how many bricks he had laid in the course of the day. They found he was responsible for 724. Such zeal as that could not be tolerated, and they gave him to understand that he need not turn up on the morrow, as they would not have him working with them. The young man complained to the foreman, who replied that he was absolutely helpless in the matter, but would put him on another job. This was done, but as the young man started afresh at the same pace as before he had a repetition of his previous

experience, and had then to go away altogether. Such interference as this must be extremely galling to the large number of workmen who desire to do a good day's work for their wage, but for a bricklayer to attempt to fight against the unwritten law in question means that he will be subjected to constant annoyances, that his mates will be "chipping" at him all the time, that complaints will be trumped up against him and carried to the foreman, and that things generally will be made so unpleasant for him that he will be forced either to work no harder than the others do, or to go elsewhere. To show how difficult the position of a foreman may be in such matters, the case may here be mentioned of a foreman in the north of London who, not very long ago, for having insisted on the bricklayers under him doing a fair day's work for their money, was repeatedly summoned before the lodge of his society, and fined 5*s.* on each occasion, for so-called "sweating."

The *maximum* of 400 bricks per day is the "recognised" limit for dwelling-houses, shops, and business premises built by a private contractor. In the case of public buildings, and especially London County Council and London School Board work, the limit is considerably less. It is to be feared that the London County

Council, especially, with its direct employment of labour and its strong trade union sympathies, must be held responsible in no small degree for the development of the "go easy" practices in the building trades generally, the standard set by its own *employés* being regarded as one which should be followed, not only on other public work, but to a certain extent on private work also. Thus a firm of contractors had a job on hand in the East End of London, and complaint was made to certain of the bricklayers—who were engaged on some straightforward work on which they could easily have laid from 600 to 700 bricks a day—that they were not doing enough. The reply they gave was: "The London County Council limit is 330 bricks the day. That is what they consider a fair day's work, and we are not going to do more for you or any one else." But this 330 limit was somewhat generous for public work, if it be true, as affirmed by one authority, that in the case of a certain Board school in London the average number of bricks laid was only 200 per day. Even this figure, too, represents activity itself compared with still another school built for the London School Board. The builder thought he was paying an unconscionable amount for labour, and he had his men watched for some days. He

found that the work they did represented—an average of 70 bricks per man per day! This particular builder could very well have followed the example of the contractor who, going to see how his job was progressing, remarked to the foreman, "I don't think we need measure up the work. We'll count the bricks."

Had there been any decrease of wages in the building trades there might have been some excuse for the adoption of "go easy" principles. But the contrary is the fact. The wages have gone up substantially of late years, but, as already shown, instead of more work being done for the extra money, there is less. The combined effect on the cost of labour has been such that, whereas a plain wall could have been put up ten years ago for from £12 to £14 per rod (272 feet), such a wall would now cost from £20 to £22 per rod. Allowance must, of course, be made for the increased cost of bricks, though 10 per cent. of this increase is due to the fact that the brickmakers adopt similar tactics to the bricklayers; but the average cost of labour alone in brickwork (exclusive of pointing) has increased from £3 to £6 per rod in the last ten years, and even this figure is sometimes exceeded. One master builder in London, noticing how slowly the work on a particular job was

proceeding, spoke about it to the foreman, and said he would like to find out how much the bricklaying was

A consideration of the problem of ... exactions of the collectors ...

thinks essential in view of the altered conditions of modern war, and which are consequently of immediate practical importance. First and foremost LORD ROBERTS deals with the question of mounted troops. Modern war shows, in his opinion, that, so far from the utility of cavalry having lapsed, duties more important than ever will be laid upon them. They will be duties, not only more important, but of a more exacting kind. The cavalry of the future must contain some of the highest intelligence in the Army, and as such will demand most careful selection. LORD ROBERTS realizes and meets the main difficulty about efficient cavalry service, so far as officers are concerned. He approves of polo and hunting "in moderation," because they are the readiest means of developing horsemanship and an eye for country; but, these amusements being expensive, he urges increased pay for the cavalry officer, or the cavalry will never get its fair share of officers with brains. The ordinary trooper is a sufficiently expensive article to his country; and inasmuch as he is now armed with a rifle, and his independence in action

... LORD ROBERTS ...

thirty years in carrying out MR. LOWE'S sound advice "to educate our masters," that these desperately crude notions underlie the action of our trade-union leaders. Legislation may, no doubt, once in a way take property from one set of people and give it to another, but its power is curiously limited in that direction. It seldom does any real good to the recipients because it dislocates the productive processes of society in the very act of confiscation. It alarms all capitalists far beyond the range of its immediate plunder, and the game which does not fall at the first discharge is not afterwards found within gunshot. If capital is not allowed to have fair profits in this country, it gently and imperceptibly transfers itself to another. It curtails its operations here, and in doing so reduces employment to a far greater extent than the temporary distribution it effects can compensate. There is really very little capital that legislation can distribute, though there is an enormous amount that it can render useless to everybody. It can shut up a factory by robbing the owner of his profits, but the factory is not

of the men were discharged, but six or seven of them returned the following day, and, finding that other men had been engaged in their place, they committed a savage assault on the new-comers, one of whom was seriously injured. Two of the assailants were taken into custody by the police, and later in the day were convicted by a magistrate and committed to prison, one of them for seven days and the other for one month. Up to the present the contractors in question have shown no partiality in the employment of non-union men, but they have caused it to be understood that, if the state of things suggested by the above incident should continue, they will take measures to protect themselves against such tyranny.

It is not against the bricklayers alone that complaints of "go easy" practices are brought. From the navvy who digs the foundations, to the painter who puts on the last coat of varnish, all the men engaged in the building trades are declared to be "tarred with the same brush" in regard to doing less work for more money, especially where there is any lack of proper supervision. And unfortunately, unless he makes up his mind to resort to exclusively non-union labour, the average master builder is practically at the mercy of his men. How they

will leave a job if they even suspect him of complaining has already been shown, and other instances might be added. If he himself should turn off one man for "going easy" and put on another in his place, the chances are that the second man will be no better than the first. His opportunities, too, of finding relief in foreign competition are limited, though he makes use of those that present themselves. Thus, an enormous trade has developed in ready-made doors from Sweden, for the simple reason that they can be brought here and sold at 9*s.* 6*d.*, while the same class of door made in England with similar machinery to that employed in Sweden would cost 13*s.* 6*d.* When the Associated Society of Carpenters and Joiners found, some years ago, that the masters were availing themselves of foreign help to overcome the tactics of that union, it called a strike in order to compel the builders not to use Swedish doors, but the attempt failed. A substantial trade has also sprung up of late years in Swedish window sashes and frames, to the further detriment of our own carpentering trade, while architrave mouldings for doors and window frames are brought from Sweden and extensively sold here at one-third the cost of English mouldings.

In these directions the builder who is not engaged on really first-class work can obtain a certain set-off against English rates of labour, but his general position is that of being handicapped all round. Thus, he has not only direct troubles in dealing with his own men, but indirect worries owing to disputes and rivalries among the different unions. The disputes more especially take the form of counter-claims to particular classes of work, in which case it is not uncommon for each union to tell the employer that if he gives way to the other all its members will be called out on all the jobs he has on hand. Some of the disputes take place over work which might fairly be claimed by either party; but others show an evident desire on the part of a powerful union to crush a weaker one out of existence, and secure additional advantages for its own members thereby.

Here is an interesting story, in three chapters, told in the "Minutes of Proceedings" of the Annual Movable General Council of the Operative Bricklayers' Society, the name of the firm in question being, however, omitted. These Minutes of Proceedings are not supposed to meet the eye of an outsider, but that is a matter of detail:

MEETING, *Saturday, October* 7, 1899.

Camberwell Branch reported they have struck Messrs. ——'s job, in ——, as they persisted in employing other than bricklayers pointing there. They desire council's sanction to pay the pickets the current rate, and as the job in —— is nearly finished, and consequently the pressure will not be very heavy on the firm unless their other jobs are struck, therefore they desire council's sanction to do so.

Moved by Bros. Stock and Skipp:

"That the Camberwell Branch be instructed to strike the whole of Messrs. ——'s jobs in the metropolitan district, and the pickets engaged in this dispute be paid the current rate, the amount beyond strike and picket pay to be defrayed from London district levy fund."

Carried.

MEETING, *Monday, October* 9, 1899.

Messrs. —— informed council that the L.M.B.A. (London Master Builders' Association) are of opinion that the action taken with that firm is distinctly unfair and unwarranted under the circumstances; they have, however, decided to discharge the men complained of, and they left the work on the 5th inst.; they therefore desire the removal of the pickets from their works.

Moved by Bros. Skipp and Newlove:

"That a conference with Messrs. —— be arranged for Thursday next, and Bros. Purdy and Lovatt be appointed delegates to meet them."

Carried.

MEETING, *Thursday, October* 12, 1899.

Bros. Lovatt and Purdy reported as deputed,—We attended Messrs. ——'s office this morning *re* others than bricklayers doing pointing at ——. Mr. —— stated that the men complained of had been removed, and that he

was prepared to conform to the metropolitan working rules on all his jobs in future, and wished the pickets to be withdrawn as soon as possible.

Moved by Bros. Richards and Newlove:

"That the delegates' report of their mission to —— be received, and Bro. Lovatt's expenses, 13*s.*, be paid."

Carried.

Moved by Bros. Mason and Stock:

"That Messrs. —— having given satisfactory assurance as to the conduct of their works in future, the strike against that firm be closed forthwith, and the pickets withdrawn."

Carried.

There is, on the whole, more toleration of non-union labour in the building trades than was formerly the case, but in many instances the non-unionist is still subjected to systematic annoyance, and even to persecution at the hands of the unionists when they can resort to such practices without danger to themselves. It is, however, not only the non-unionist who suffers. There are hundreds of men who have joined their union, partly under compulsion, but also because of the benefits that seemed to be assured to them. Many of these men are known to have paid in their subscriptions for a period of twenty years or so, and such men may be looking forward to benefits which amount practically to old-age pensions. One can imagine, therefore, the position of a man when told that he must

either obey some order of the union—such as one to leave the service of a respected employer —or else be driven out of the union, and thereby forfeit the whole of the benefits for which he has been subscribing for twenty years, and all the provision he has been making for old age. Whether or not a trade union has any right to do this sort of thing is a question that must be left to those who are learned in the law; but one thing certain is that a working man cannot be expected to fight out the matter with his union, and in some very shameful cases that have occurred the men have seen no alternative but to surrender to the despotic commands of the union officials.

Still another class of troubles is represented by an incident that occurred at Bath, where 100 masons and bricklayers left a job rather than work with five society men who had not paid certain penalties imposed on them, the strikers insisting that either the men should pay up or the firm should discharge them. The five would not pay, the firm would not discharge them, and so the 100 struck work, and remained out until the local officials ordered them to return.

EFFECT ON HOUSE PROPERTY

As the outcome of all these disputes, rivalries, and squabbles among the men themselves, a further augmentation in the cost of production takes place, the figure eventually reached being far above that for which the building ought to have been erected. When possible, the builder naturally seeks to recover the increased expenses from his patrons, or from what the operatives evidently regard as the bottomless purse of the British ratepayer; so that eventually it is the public who pay. Sometimes, however, a builder will find his calculations quite upset by the vagaries of the labour world, as in the case of one who had reckoned on a good profit from building a bank in London, his contract standing at a substantial figure, but who eventually found himself £1,500 to the bad. When the speculative builder feels that he must not exceed a certain outlay he is under a strong inducement to guard against loss by building in the jerry-built style of which so much is heard; and here, again, it is the public who suffer. They suffer,

too, in common with the building-trade operatives themselves, through the increase of rents, and this increase affects not only new buildings which have cost more to erect than they should have done, but others which, owing to the increase in wages and the "go easy" system of working, cost more for repairs. A landlord who has twice raised the rents of his small house property by one shilling during the past ten years, and has increased those of middle class property from, say, £45 to £48, declares that the extra charge is swallowed up by what it costs him more to keep the houses in proper condition; so here, again, it is the public who pay. The building trade mechanic who has secured another 5*s.* a week wages for doing less work grumbles if he is called on to give a shilling a week more for rent; but he is not so heavily hit as the labourer who earns only 3*s.* a week more and must also pay the extra shilling; while neither has so much right to complain as the average professional man, who works as hard as ever for a stationary salary, and must meet the additional expenses which mechanic and labourer have combined to bring upon him, without his having the chance of gaining any benefit whatever in return.

An effective remedy for the present state of things in the building trade will not be easy to

find. That trade includes so many small masters, represents so many different branches, each with its separate union among the men, and is so much subject to local influences, that the opportunities for the occurrence of troubles are exceptionally numerous. If the whole of the masters could show as much backbone as certain individuals among them do, and if, improving still further on their present combinations, they formed a solid and compact body, through which individual losses sustained in the interests of the whole trade would be met out of a common fund, there would be a better chance of overcoming trade union tactics, and the arbitrary powers of the unions would, as one man has put it, "tumble to pieces like a house of cards." On the other hand, it is feared that as long as municipal bodies like the London County Council remain what they are—their labour members, returned by extremely active labour organisations, getting the controlling voice on labour questions, and playing into the hands of the trade union workers, who fix a standard, as it were, which the *employés* of other public bodies, and of private contractors as well, are becoming more and more disposed to accept,—so long will it be practically impossible to place the trade on a satisfactory footing.

THE ENGINEERING TRADES

THE position in the engineering trades has greatly improved since the dispute of four years ago, the effects of the famous agreement then arrived at having been most beneficial to the employers, while they have also conferred advantages on the employed, and have exercised a good influence on other trades in the country as well. The conditions laid down by the agreement were at the time regarded as the harsh terms of a remorseless conqueror; yet since then the men's society has prospered more than it ever did before, and the men individually have been getting better returns. The agreement established the great principle of freedom alike for the employer and for the employed. The employer was to be free in the making of such arrangements as might be suitable for the management and efficiency of his shops; he was to be free to appoint what men he chose to take charge of the machines, and to engage trade unionists or non-unionists as he thought fit. The employed, in his turn,

was to exercise his own discretion whether he joined a trade union or not. Altogether, as the direct result of this agreement, there has not been a single cessation of work of any moment during four years of unexampled prosperity. Differences of opinion, more or less serious, have certainly arisen, but these have been settled by representatives of both sides without mediation. As an illustration of the spirit that now prevails, it may be mentioned that, while the old rule of "one man, one machine" is still maintained, there are shops where the subterfuge is accepted by the men of putting two machines on one bed, or of grouping a set of tools together, and in each case regarding them as one machine. Such, indeed, is the improvement that, when one employer was asked what was the position now, as compared with the state of things at the time of the dispute, he replied, "Oh, it's just like heaven." Without assuming any responsibility for the accuracy of this comparison, one may, at least, declare that the engineering employers are better able to meet competition now than they were before. Thus, one of them who, when the old restrictions were in full force, found he was being undersold by Germans, who were disposing of their goods in the next county, can now not only hold his own at home, but is even

able to compete with the Germans in their own country; and this, too, though he is employing no larger number of hands, and is paying no more for wages in proportion to the work done.

Thus far all is satisfactory, and it is gratifying to be able to throw a little light into a narrative of industrial conditions that contains so much shade. Yet truth compels the statement that, while the leaders of the men employed in the engineering trades are beginning to see more clearly how the interests of the employed are bound up with those of the employers, and to understand the real nature of the conditions which the latter have to face, these newer ideas and this broader knowledge have not yet permeated the general mass of the men. Thus it has been found necessary, for example, in engineering shops where non-unionists are engaged on certain portions of the work, to locate them in parts of the premises where they are practically shut off, and are so guarded that no trade unionist can get to them. This is especially the case where new methods have been introduced, requiring new tools or the alteration of existing ones. The old hands belonging to the "skilled" class took so unkindly to these new methods that complete failure was experienced, until unskilled

men were brought in from the street, put where the old hands could not get to them, and taught what to do. The resort to this expedient has been a marked success, better work being turned out without either harassing conditions on the one side or sweating on the other. But direct encouragement is thus being given to engineering employers to rely more and more on non-unionists in regard to certain classes of work, of which the unionists at one time exclusively engaged on them were undoubtedly restricting the output.

Although, in fact, there have been the improvements already spoken of in the relations of employers and employed in the engineering trade, there is still too great a prejudice on the part of the workers against labour-saving machinery, still too great a reluctance to work with full energy (in each case owing to the desire of the workman either not to over-exert oneself or to "leave something for others"), and still too great a need for hearty co-operation and for a recognition of a community of interests between masters and men. Competition from abroad is becoming more and more active. The Canadian Pittsburg which is springing up at Sydney, Cape Breton, is already sending pig-iron into this country at the rate of 5,000 tons a

week, most of it going to Glasgow and underselling home makers; the extensive plant for steel works at Sydney is now ready; and the rail works there were to be finished by the middle, or towards the end, of 1902. By that time the companies concerned were expected to be in a fair way to effect something like a revolution in the iron and steel industry,—thanks to the advantages they possess in the co-existence of almost illimitable coal, ironstone, and limestone supplies on navigable ocean harbours; the lower cost at which they can "assemble" materials at Sydney for iron and steel, as compared with Pittsburg and other centres; the possession by them of new works replete with all the inventions and labour-saving appliances that the ingenuity of man has yet devised for these particular trades; the comparative nearness of Sydney to the world's markets; and the bonuses granted by the Dominion Government (in addition to other advantages) to allow of those markets being reached at less cost. Then, again, steel castings can be bought here from German makers for less than they cost when made not twenty miles from the place where they are wanted, and the same is true of German steel ship-plates.

In the opinion of some, at least, of the practical

men who have had to face the whole problem, foreign competition such as this can be met only by improved systems of working, and especially by a system which will get rid of lingering restrictions, allow of the introduction of every possible mechanical improvement, and encourage the men to co-operate loyally with their employers, working with their full energy and producing the best results—a system which will, in effect, allow two tons to be produced at the same cost as is now required to produce one. This is the conviction, too, not only of engineering employers, but of a prominent trade unionist who recently visited some Continental ironworks, and returned full of astonishment at what he had seen, declaring that, unless some such lines as those here indicated were followed, we were bound to fall behind. And the first step to be taken towards securing the improved system in question is to convince the workers of the folly of their opposition to labour-saving appliances, and to show them that such appliances, though they may necessitate a certain rearrangment of labour, never fail to increase the total volume of work, and hence, also, the total number of workers. When the whole range of "go easy" fallacies has been swept away, and a greater recognition of the community of interest between

employer and employed is brought about, the engineering trades will follow up with a still more pronounced progress the improvements which the last four years have already secured to them.

BOILERMAKING AND SHIPBUILDING

FROM the engineering trades to boilermaking is a natural transition, but the lighter shades to be found in the former are absent from the latter, which must be painted in dark, if not gloomy, colours. With boilermaking is associated iron and steel shipbuilding, and in neither branch of industry does freedom of employment exist, while restrictions of all kinds are the order of the day. It is, for example, no unusual thing for foremen who seek to promote the interests of their employers to receive letters telling them that, if they persist in doing certain things, they will have to render an account to the union, to which they are compelled to belong; and there are numerous instances in which foremen who have given orders to the workmen during the day have had to appear before those very same workmen at a meeting of the society in the evening, and receive judgment at their hands for something or other of which the men have disapproved. How in these conditions discipline

can be maintained it is difficult to imagine. At present the men are practically supreme. They are the most highly paid, and they are the most irregular workers, of any in the whole trade. Riveters could make £1 a day if they really tried, but they are content to earn from 12*s.* to 15*s.*, and, as the effect of their high pay, at least one-third of their time is wilfully lost. On the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, especially, after each pay-day, the streets and the public-houses in the shipbuilding centres will be filled with idle men, and the monthly report of their society is most persistent in exhorting the men to give up their dissolute habits and respect their employers' interests by keeping to work.

Even when they are at work the amount of their output is less than it should be, for the boilermakers control the machines, and they resist the introduction of the new tools and methods which are now almost universal in the United States. There are certain machines, for instance, which are being introduced into American shipbuilding yards at the rate of 1,200 per month; but, when it is sought to establish them here, objections will be raised either to their being used at all, or to their being worked by the same class of men as on the other side of the Atlantic; while, if it is agreed to use

the machines, the output will be restricted to the same amount as would be done by hand, and the demand will be made, not only that the same rate of pay shall be given, but that the same number of men shall be put on as if the work were being done by hand, the result being that one man in three will have nothing to do but watch two others do the work. In the United States the use of these very machines enables the shipbuilders to effect a saving of from 30 to 60 per cent. in the cost of labour. Here, owing to the restrictions imposed, there will be no saving on them at all.

What with the waste of time by these autocrats of the British shipbuilding yards, and what with the restrictions imposed on their output when they are at work, it is not surprising to find that long delays sometimes occur in the execution of orders. There are vessels which have had to wait periods of nine months or more for their riveting, and shipbuilders lose orders because of the difficulties in the way of guaranteeing delivery. An immense industry, which has been growing by leaps and bounds during the last twenty years, is seriously hampered, partly because there are not enough men to do the work, and partly because the men there are do not turn out the work they could.

The unsophisticated outsider would naturally ask, "Why not put on more, or others?" Such a solution would seem to be the natural one, but the rule of the men's union is that no one shall become a boilermaker until he has served his apprenticeship, and the general policy is to restrict the number of apprentices to the lowest possible limit. This particular evil is declared to be growing worse every day. The boilermakers have got a good trade, and they want to keep it in a few hands. They want, especially, so to curtail the proportions of the labour supply in their particular industry that they can depend on work being obtained by every man on their books. In this way employers are bound to give jobs to profligate or almost worthless men, who would speedily find their level if there were freedom of labour; and they are bound, also, to keep on paying a high rate of wages to one and all, owing to the artificial scarcity of the supply. All this time there will be strong, vigorous men at the yard gates or within call, longing to have the chance of doing an honest day's work in order to support their families, and the shipbuilders may be filled with anxiety because those who should be at work are walking about the streets; but, though the men at the gates could readily be taught the business, they must

not be called in because it would be contrary to trade union rules. The employment of a single man who had not served his apprenticeship, or was not a recognised member of the union, would bring all the unionists out on strike.

So the work in British shipbuilding yards may wait for month after month, and a state of things is brought about which contrasts most strongly with what can be done, say, in Germany. A German shipbuilder was asked what he did when the work grew heavy and there were not enough men for it. He replied that the course he pursued was to get in touch, through the proper channels, with men who were on the point of leaving the army, to engage them for his yard, and then to put them through a short course of training. He found that in a month or two they were able to do excellent work, and they made most desirable *employés*. Of men of this type he had already had 700.

It is for such freedom of employment as this that the British shipbuilder longs. Apart, too, from the grievous harm which is being done to an important industry, he regards it as little short of a scandal that one man, in want of bread, should be prevented from doing work which he could easily learn to do, and of which there is abundance to be done; while another

man, who keeps him out, gets so much pay that he is able to spend a good part of his time in the streets or the publichouse, and will not himself give his harassed employer more than two-thirds of his energy. When a shipbuilder is told that this is "a free country," he is inclined to doubt the statement; and so, too, is the would-be worker who stands in enforced idleness at the shipyard gates.

After these remarks, the following extracts from the "Boilermakers' Society's New Rules (1901)" may be left to speak for themselves. The passages printed in italics are "additions to the previous rules (1896)," and they show that the tendency in this particular trade is to increase the restrictions rather than to diminish them:

RULE 22.—ADMISSION OF APPRENTICES.

Section 2.— . . . No one shall be acknowledged by this society as having any claim on the trade who does not commence working at the same at the age of 16 years, and continue at it for the space of five years, so as to enable him to become an efficient workman; and unless he is such he shall not be admitted a member of this society.

Section 5.— . . . The number of apprentices must not exceed one to every five journeymen working in any shop or yard. This to apply in slack times as well as busy times. The average number of journeymen working at the trade for any employer during five years shall be a guide for regulating the number of apprentices employed.

Section 6.— . . . *It shall be the duty of the District Committee to examine their Registration Book of Apprentices each quarter, and should it be found that the number of lads entered in any branch Registration Book exceed the number allowed in rule, they shall have power to call upon that branch or branches to call a Meeting of their members with the object of reducing the number of apprentices to the before-going limit.*

RULE 26.—DONATION BENEFITS.

Section 14.—*When there are more than* 10 *per cent. of the members signing the Home Donation and Vacant Book, the Executive Council shall issue orders that no member shall be allowed to work overtime except when sanctioned by the District Committee and approved by the Executive Council. Members violating this shall be fined* 1*s. for each hour they may work in excess of that so granted.*

RULE 43.—MEMBERS ACTING CONTRARY TO TRADE INTERESTS.

Section 1.—Any member of this society, either angle-iron smith, plater, riveter, caulker, holder-up, or sheet-iron worker, instructing any one not connected with our society (except legal apprentices) by allowing him to practise with his tools, or otherwise instructing him in other branches of the trade, shall, on proof thereof, be fined for the first offence 10*s.*; for the second, £1; and the third, to be expelled the society.

Section 2.—All riveting machines *used in shipbuilding where piecework is done* must be worked by a full set of riveters, *who must be members of our society. Any member working shorthanded, or any member working on such with a non-member, shall be fined* 5*s. for each offence.*

All riveting machines used in boiler shops or bridge yards must be worked by our members at riveters' rates.

Caulking, cutting, and other machines, whether hydraulic, electrical, or pneumatic, etc., to be worked by our members at recognised rates.

All light holes, manholes, and all holes appertaining to riveting and caulking must be cut out by our members, whether by machinery or hand. Members refusing to do such work when requested shall be fined for the first offence 40*s.*, second offence £4.

Section 3.—All work done at punching machines, hydraulic presses, and rolls must be done by our members, but platers' wages must be paid. Members refusing to do such work when requested shall be fined for the first offence 40*s.*, second offence £4.

Or if any members are working piecework and employ any other than our members on such machines, they shall each be fined 40*s. for the first offence and* £4 *for the second offence; and any member working at any shop or yard where such is being done, and does not report the same to his branch, shall be fined* 10*s. for such neglect.*

Section 4.—It is not in the interest of this society that piecework should be done, but when members are compelled to do it, members of one branch of the trade shall not take piecework from another. Any member or members being proved to have violated the above, both the contracting members shall be fined £5 for each offence. Any member taking work below the usual price shall be fined £1 for the first offence, £5 for the second, and be suspended from all benefits for twelve months if detected a third time. Any member taking piecework must consult the other members of that branch of the trade working in the shop or yard before taking the same, or be fined as above. This only applies to work not mentioned in the recognised Price Lists. Any member taking work by the piece and not sharing equally, in proportion to his wages, any surplus made over and

above the weekly wages paid to members working on such job, shall be summoned before his branch or committee of his branch, and, if he do not comply with the above regulation, he shall be fined, in the first instance, £5; second, £10; and, in the third instance, be excluded, subject to the approval of the Executive Council. Any member working piecework, or causing it to be introduced into any shop or yard where it is not already in existence, without first laying the matter before his branch and obtaining the consent of the District Committee, shall be fined £5 for the first offence, and expelled for the second. Branches where there is no District Committee must obtain the consent of the Executive Council.

IRONFOUNDING

OF the state of things existing in the ironfounding industry it must suffice to give the following extracts from a set of district by-laws of the Friendly Society of Ironfounders of England, Ireland, and Wales. These by-laws are for a district only, but they have been approved by the Executive Council of the society, whose sanction gives the approval of the society as a whole:

RULE V.

It shall be a recognised rule to limit the number of boys to the rate of one boy to three men, and should a dispute arise with regard to the number in any shop, the average shall be taken from the number of men having worked in the shop during the five previous years.

RULE VII.

Should any member of these branches consider that any of their shopmates are doing work in less time than it has taken formerly to do, whether set work or day work, or, if piecework, doing for less money than the amount previously paid for the same work from the same pattern, it shall be the duty of each and every member in the shop to warn such member or members of the consequences attending the same, or be fined *2s. 6d.*; and

should the offenders after this notice still persist in the same course, it shall be the duty of the shop steward to acquaint the president of the same, so that a committee meeting may be called to inquire into the case; and should the said meeting, after hearing both sides, consider that the law has been violated, they shall enforce the fine of £1 against each of the offenders. Any shop steward neglecting his duty in warning the officers of his branch shall subject himself to a fine of 2*s.* 6*d.* for each neglect.

RULE XII.

In order to promote the interests of the trade, each and every member in these branches shall discourage the present system of core-making, so that this important branch of our trade may not be taken out of our hands by those not connected with the trade. In order to do this members in these branches shall not be allowed to work with, or be assisted by, any labourer or other man who may be introduced to core-making after this date, but shall not interfere with those who have served a legal time, or who are serving their time, or men who are at present working at core-making; and in future all boys coming into the foundry to learn the trade of moulding shall work two years at core-making, and shall then come on the floor as vacancies occur. Any member being discharged through compliance with or through defending this rule shall be recommended to the Executive for the Auxiliary Benefit, and any member violating this rule shall be fined £1, subject to the decision of the Executive Committee.

The excuse has been made that workmen object to the introduction of new machinery because it means that less skilled labour will be put on at a lower wage, to the detriment of

themselves. That this is a sufficient reason for not using machinery, and refusing to bring a factory up to date, will hardly be admitted by those who have any real regard for industrial progress; but an incident which occurred at Hull early in 1901 shows that machinery may be objected to even when the employers are careful to guard against any injury to individual interests. A local firm introduced into their works a "Tabor" moulding machine, of which there are said to be sixty in use in the country, all worked by labourers. The firm offered to allow their moulders to work the machines, instead of engaging fresh unskilled labourers for them, as they would have been warranted in doing; but the moulders refused unless they were allowed to have labourers, thus involving another set of wages. To this the firm objected, and outside help was brought in to do the work the moulders would not take up. The moulders were then called out on strike by their society, the works were closely picketed, acts of violence were committed, and the dispute went on until a settlement was effected by the stipendiary magistrate. Here we have an instance of a strike against machinery even where the utmost consideration had been shown by the employers for the interests of their men.

THE SOUTH METROPOLITAN GAS COMPANY

THE story of the South Metropolitan Gas Company and their men is well worth recalling at the present moment, because it shows alike how aggressive trade unionism may become, how great is the aversion of trade union officials to any scheme that tends to bind masters and men together, and how successfully trade union tactics can be defeated when the employers represent a compact and determined body. In 1889, on the suggestion of the Gas Workers' Union, the Company granted to their men (to whom they had themselves offered it on two previous occasions) a three-shift instead of a two-shift system, and the concession was made so readily that the officials of the union thought they had only to ask for more and they would get it. Finding that the stokers were filling up some of their leisure moments by oiling the retort lids, carried on levers, they insisted that this was not stokers' work—although the stokers themselves raised no objection to it—and that special men should

be put on for this trivial bit of work. In this and in other matters the object seemed to be to find all sorts of little jobs which would afford an excuse for getting more men put on the wages list. Having secured all the stokers as members, the union next tried to get the yard men and the mechanics, while the policy of interference carried on rendered the position of affairs altogether intolerable. Thereupon the company introduced their profit-sharing scheme, hoping thereby to create a closer bond between themselves and their men. This was so little to the taste of the union that it withdrew all its members at a week's notice, thus causing a difficulty which involved the company in expenditure and losses amounting to £100,000. When the strike was at last over the company took back the union men, but their secretary threatened that the next time there would be no week's notice given. The company then decided that they would employ no more union men for the future, and to this resolve they have adhered, with the result that, since then, employers and employed at the South Metropolitan Gas Works have been quite a happy family. The business, too, is conducted more cheaply there than at other London gas works which are still under trade union domination. Thus in the early days

at the South Metropolitan the wages represented 2*s.* 7*d.* per ton of coal used; the amount went up to 3*s.* 7*d.* when trade union influence became supreme in the works, and it still remains at about that figure in the case of London companies which have not thrown off the trade union yoke; whereas the South Metropolitan Company have reduced the amount to 2*s.* 2*d.*, although the wages they pay are somewhat higher than those of the other companies. The reason is that the non-unionists at the South Metropolitan work better than the unionists elsewhere do, and that, since the strike, machinery has been extensively substituted at the works for hand labour, whereas, though machinery is used in works where trade unionism is an active force, the output is so restricted by the men that not much more is actually done than could be accomplished by hand. While the non-union stokers will draw fifty retorts an hour, the unionists, using similar machinery, keep to forty an hour at the outside. Then in regard to wages, it is worth mentioning that in 1898 the South Metropolitan and the Crystal Palace District Companies both decided voluntarily to increase the stokers' wages 7½ per cent., an example which the other companies refrained from following until they were practically obliged so to do.

BOOT AND SHOE TRADES

THERE are very few trade unions connected with boot and shoe manufacture in which any attempt is made to specify the amount of work a man shall do in a given period, whether hour, or day, or week. At the same time, there is a clear understanding that a man shall not do more than a certain quantity, and if he should do more his life may be made intolerable. That this expression is not too strong is shown by a remarkable case which occurred at Leicester during the course of 1900. It was found that a certain sober, steady, frugal sort of man was moving about from one factory to another, although at each of them he had earned the respect of his employer as a person who seemed really to take an interest in his work. But he had become unpopular with the other men because they thought he was doing too much. At last he got to a factory where his shopmates not only grumbled at the amount of energy he was showing, but lodged a formal complaint against

him with the officials of their society. The officials took the matter up, and sent a summons to the man to attend at the union office and give an explanation. Thereupon he went just outside the town, and committed suicide by cutting his throat. He left a pathetic note behind, stating that his life had been made a burden to him, and that the fact of his having had a summons to appear before the officials of the union had caused him to commit the act. In the opinion of one large employer of labour to whom this story was related, if the records of the coroners' courts were searched many another such case would be found in them.

In the shoe trade, as in various others, the idea at the back of the check put on individual energy is that the less work each man does the greater will be the number employed. There is, it is argued, only a certain amount of work to be done, and if every one tries to do as much as he can there will not be enough to go round. So they "go easy," more or less, and there is no doubt that the output of the English worker is a good deal less than that of the American. It may be that this fact is not entirely due to the former. The American factories are better organised, and the work is "got ready" in such a way that it can be taken

in hand without loss of time. Fault is therefore found with the English manufacturers for not adopting a similar course. It is feared, however, that even if the English workers had precisely the same conditions as their American rivals, they would not be likely to turn out the same quantity of work unless they greatly changed their present ideas and disposition. In any case we have the remarkable fact that while the American manufacturers have to pay their men £3 a week, against the 28*s.*, 30*s.*, or 35*s.* paid here, they could at one time send certain classes of boots from Chicago to London and beat the English makers in their own markets. It might, of course, be suggested that if the English workers were paid £3 a week they would produce more; but in present conditions it is hardly probable that any English manufacturer would care to make the experiment, while it is believed that even if he did the men's unions would take care that nothing like the same amount of work was done for the money as is the case in America.

The whole question of the limitation of output is regarded by the employers as one of grave concern to the welfare of the trade, especially when coupled with the theory of the *minimum* wage—a theory which they consider altogether

unsound in principle—and the frequent demands for increased wages. The result, they declare, has been to bring about a large increase in the cost of production, adding to the difficulties which manufacturers experience in obtaining remunerative prices for their goods, and in meeting foreign competition. Dealing with these subjects in their annual report for 1900, the executive committee of the Incorporated Federated Associations of Boot and Shoe Manufacturers of Great Britain and Ireland say:

> There is naturally a general desire on the part of the workmen to obtain higher wages, but the advance of wages need not necessarily involve an increase in the cost of production, and might be accompanied by a considerable decrease in such cost if the workmen were free to apply their ability and capacity to a reasonable and proper extent. The contention of manufacturers that the majority of workmen could easily do more work is supported by very strong evidence. Complaints of the limitation and reduction of output are very general in the trade, and come from manufacturers in all centres. It is apparently the policy of the union to get the *minimum* rate of wages fixed as high as possible and to stifle the production.
>
> The restriction of output is a very serious matter, and the art of measuring up to a nicety the quantity of work to be done is universally practised by the operatives in all the departments of the factories, and is a grave menace to the future progress of the trade. The circumstances surrounding the recent suicide of a Leicester operative, who was summoned before the local union executive to

answer a charge of doing too much work, indicate the persecution and terrorism to which a workman who desires to do an honest day's work is subjected by the system of espionage, to which the union lends the support of its organisation. The adoption of this short-sighted and retrogressive policy by the union, and the consequent check to the development of industry in the trade, were the chief causes of the lock-out in 1895, and it was anticipated that the provisions of the terms of settlement, which place this question beyond the scope of arbitration and declare that it shall not be made a matter of dispute by the union, would be sufficient to ensure the discontinuance of the practice, but the hope has not been realised.

Referring to the introduction (in accordance with these terms of settlement) of the "piecework statement," by means of which, it was hoped, an improved condition of working would be brought about, the executive committee further say:

The statement has been used by the union for the purpose of regulating and limiting the amount of work to be done by workmen on weekly wages, and to supply a pretext for interference by the union officials in the management generally of lasting departments. Such action on the part of the union is not a fair and proper use of the piecework statement, and it was never intended that the statement should be applied to day workers. Under such a system of limitation and interference the workmen are not encouraged to work to the best of their ability, and the employers derive none of the advantages of piecework, but are subjected to all its disadvantages, with the result that the cost of production is materially

increased. If the present policy of the union in regard to these matters is continued, it will become necessary for the federation to find some speedy and effective remedy.

In the course of their report for 1901, the executive committee, in referring to the objection of the manufacturers to a *minimum* wage, say that objection is not based upon any desire to keep down wages which the workmen are capable of earning, and they add:

> In effect, the *minimum* wage system encourages slowness, the standard of efficiency being regulated by the capacity of the slower and less competent men. Since the present *minimums* were fixed, the union, through its officials, has persistently influenced the workmen to do less work, and brought continual pressure to bear upon them to check any disposition upon their part to work quickly, with the result that the product of labour at the present time of all classes of operatives, whether employed at or above the *minimums*, is considerably less than it was formerly. The manufacturers contend that if a workman wishes to increase his wage he must increase the value of the service he renders.

In view of the existence of such conditions as these, it is not surprising to find that the present position of the English boot and shoe trade is far from satisfactory, and has given rise to much anxiety and trouble.

RAILWAY WORKERS

In the railway world trade unionism has not become so powerful a force as in certain other branches of labour, and this is not surprising considering that, whereas the total number of railway servants in Great Britain is about 550,000, the membership of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants in December, 1900, was only 62,000. The attempts made to compel the companies to recognise the society and submit more or less to its dictation have been unsuccessful except in one instance, and the officers of the society are now wisely content to accept the principle that railway servants who have grievances should approach their superior officers direct, and not through a third party. Yet, although the wings of the trade union officials have thus been clipped, and although the rules of the A.S.R.S. may be quite harmless in themselves, the teaching of trade unionism in regard to the "go easy" policy is having its effect on the actual working of British railways. Apart

from their own inclinations, a large body of railwaymen (though by no means all) accept the axiom that if they refrain from working too hard it may lead to another man, who might otherwise be unemployed, being put on as well. There are the further considerations that the individual who "puts his back into" his work stands a chance of promotion over his fellows, which in itself is distasteful to them, while he renders it necessary for them to work all the harder in order to escape complaints from the foreman. One railwayman, described as "a very smart chap," who was loading coal, and putting into his work all the energy he possessed, was told by his mates that "he mustn't work like that," and when he still kept on at the same rate they struck him in the face and blackened his eye. The enforcement of the unwritten law on the good workers who want to do their best may not always take so vigorous a form as this, but "Ca' canny" is undoubtedly spreading on railways as in many other branches of industry. A few weeks ago a certain station-master applied to his chiefs in London for more porters. "Why," he was told, "you have got (so many), and your traffic hasn't grown." "Yes," he replied, "but the men won't work as they used to." And that particular station-master is not the only

one connected with railways who says the same thing.

The question of not working too hard is, of course, quite distinct from the question of not working too long. In regard to the latter the trade unions boast that they have been able to secure for the men increased facilities for leisure, repose, and mental improvement. Yet railwaymen who have been given their Sunday willingly surrender it if they see a chance of making extra money, while from country districts there come strong complaints to head officials in London that signal-box men and other railway servants, who already have a certain wage, devote their increased leisure to shoe-making, gardening, plastering, and other employments, thus taking the bread out of the mouths of those in the place who depend on these occupations for their livelihood. This is a phase of the "shorter hours" movement which was probably not foreseen.

Then in regard to wages, there is an increasing disposition on the part of railwaymen to become permeated with the essentially trade union principle that all those who are engaged in the same kind of employment should receive the same rate of pay, irrespective of any question of merit. This tendency is adding to the complications of

the situation, and is not working to the advantage of the *employés.* There are instances where a railway company may wish to recognise the services of a certain signalman, for instance, by giving him an increase in his pay; but when this is done, all his mates in neighbouring cabins—who previously may have been quite content with their wages—become dissatisfied. A company might also be disposed to raise the wages of a hundred signalmen in a particular district, but this would at once lead to a demand for a similar increase for all the signalmen, thousands in number, throughout the system. In the circumstances, therefore, a railway company now has to think twice before it grants an increase either to a particular individual or to a particular group among its *employés.* While, however, trade union influence may thus hamper the concession of increased advantages to the men, the fact that railway companies have made concessions without any trade union intervention at all is regarded as showing that such intervention is by no means necessary to the securing of higher pay.

Although trade unionism may not adopt a systematically aggressive attitude towards the railway companies, the latter would not care to see any increase even in such strength as it may

be able to exercise, and it is an open secret that the benefit funds which they form in the interests of their *employés* are due, not alone to philanthropic motives, but to a desire to make their servants contented and give them less reason for joining trade unions in order to provide for sickness, old age, and death. It is also frankly avowed by trade union leaders that their opposition to such benefit fund schemes is due less to any real objection to the schemes themselves than to the possibilities they foresee of the unions losing their hold over the men.

THE TRAINING OF BOYS

How the shipowners rose in revolt against trade union interference, and eventually established their authority by means of the Shipping Federation, is too well known a story to need repeating; but their latest development, in the organisation of a scheme, now being successfully carried out, for building up a new type of British seaman by getting boys from country districts and training them either as "boy apprentices" or as "boy sailors," opens up a question which is of much wider application than to the shipping trade alone. There is another important industry where the employers are keen on making some arrangement with their men's union, under which exceptional facilities will be offered to intelligent and promising boys to enter the trade and undergo a special course of training, for the purpose of becoming qualified either to some day take the post of foreman or manager, or at least to turn out the very best class of work. The employers are willing to go to practically any

expense in the carrying out of this scheme in the best interests of the trade; but the average trade union official is more interested in members who pay than in the training of foremen and managers who may eventually regard him with no very kindly feeling; nor is he desirous of seeing workmen put under greater personal obligation to the employer to the detriment of trade union influence. It may be for some such reason as this that the union in question has not yet seen its way to accept the employers' proposals, though one may hope that it will yet do so. Here we have a case where both employers and employed have a powerful combination, so that the former are not able to carry out a beneficent scheme of this kind without the consent of the latter, whereas the shipowners are able to act entirely on their own initiative.

In other directions, too, this question of training the young, and of securing a greater hold on the workers, is coming to the front, because it is found that lads in shops where trade unionism of the more active type is supreme are losing all sense of discipline and all sense of respect towards the employer, as the result of listening to the talk that goes on, and of themselves being led to adopt the ideas and follow the example of the more dissatisfied spirits among the men.

One extensive employer of labour feels the matter so keenly that he has drawn up an elaborate scheme for subjecting all boys to a regular drill —and girls, too, up to a certain age—with the idea, among other things, of teaching them discipline and respect for their superiors. Whether or not this would be a feasible plan need not be discussed here; but owners of factories are certainly feeling not alone the decadence of the (trade union) working man, but also a distinct degeneration on the part of the working boy.

PLATE-GLASS BEVELLERS

ONE of the most compact illustrations of the working of militant trade unionism, and of the results it may bring about in causing trade to leave the country, is afforded by the story of the bevelled plate-glass industry. In 1891 the employers formed themselves into the London Plate-Glass Trades Association, and agreed to give official recognition to the National Plate-Glass Bevellers' Union, which, it was thought, would discharge a useful function in fixing a standard rate of wages, instead of leaving each manufacturer in uncertainty as to what his competitors were paying. But as time went on the officials of the union resolved, as it seemed, to acquire practical domination over the whole industry, and things reached such a pass that the employers were at last expected to take on no man who could not produce a certificate showing that he had been approved by the union. Rather than have trouble several employers accepted the requirement, and engaged

men only through the union; but others firmly resisted the innovation, and it looked as if opportunity were being watched to compel them to surrender. In 1894 a union official complained of having been insulted in the shop of one of the associated masters, and a demand was then made on the other masters that they should not allow the owner of this shop to remain in their combination. The refusal of the demand led to a strike, which, though it lasted only a fortnight and ended in the defeat of the men, was a most eventful one for the trade. When the continued supply of bevelled glass in this country was endangered, inquiries were made for it in Belgium. At that time, it is said, bevelled glass was not being produced there; but the Belgians had their eyes opened to the possibilities of a new industry. They investigated the subject and speedily undertook the business, with such success that, thanks to their system of lower wages and longer hours, they produced at a less price than was done here, and worked up a substantial trade, supplying not only London but the provinces. This trade they have practically kept ever since.

In 1895 further trouble arose in London because the men's union disapproved of certain generous terms which one of the firms that had

stood out the most vigorously against the union demands proposed to make with an apprentice. Here, again, there was a deliberate attempt to get control of the business. The firm in question, Messrs. J. & W. O. Bailey, refused to yield, and thereupon the union men were withdrawn from the shop, the place was closely picketed, scenes of violence and disorder occurred, the men who remained at work, or were smuggled into the place, slept on the premises armed with revolvers, several of them were brutally assaulted (their assailants being afterwards convicted at the Clerkenwell Sessions), and there was an evident intention on the part of the union to make it impossible for the firm to continue their business at all. The state of terrorism was stopped, however, when Messrs. Bailey obtained an interim injunction, while not only was this interim injunction afterwards made perpetual, but, as the result of the now well-known action of "J. & W. O. Bailey v. Pye and others," tried before Mr. Baron Pollock and a special jury in the Queen's Bench Division in 1897, the firm were awarded £674 damages, and costs taxed at £543. Here, however, comes the irony of the situation. The National Glass Bevellers' Union had had the financial support of ninety-nine other unions in these legal

proceedings, but the writs of execution against the secretary and the principal defendants resulted in the plaintiffs getting just £5 of the £1,200 that was awarded them. Yet in the meantime the men's society had voted to the defendants in the action a substantial sum of money for the trouble, expense, and inconvenience to which they had been put. The final outcome of the dislocation the trade has suffered is that the Belgian makers get almost the whole of the orders for stock sizes which can be made in large quantities, while the English makers have to content themselves chiefly with orders for special sizes, or for comparatively small quantities which it would be too much trouble to get executed abroad. But the loss sustained has not been all on the side of our manufacturers, for the foreign competition, brought about under the circumstances described, has had the effect of reducing the wages of the men 25 per cent. below what they were when trade unionism first became an active force among them.

PLATE-GLASS AND SHEET-GLASS

In the plate-glass and sheet-glass industry trade unionism is not now of much account, inasmuch as the majority of the firms formerly engaged in it have disappeared, mainly under the pressure of foreign competition, and the business has been left in the hands of two firms, so far as this country is concerned, so that the workmen, though they have their union, cannot take the same liberties as might be taken in a trade with a larger numbers of employers. Then, too, the men who can really influence the manufacture are paid piecework, and have no reason for "going easy." But the trade is especially worth referring to because it has had the rare experience of profiting by foreign troubles, a strike among the workers of Belgium, which ended in August 1901, having increased business here and enabled the English manufacturers to obtain better prices during the twelve months the strike lasted, while even when it ended the prices did not go back to the level at which they stood before the strike began.

THE YORKSHIRE GLASS BOTTLE TRADE

In the glass bottle trade, however, trade unionism has been a much more active force. There are two branches of this trade, one dealing with flint-glass bottles, chiefly used for medicine, and the other dealing with ordinary bottles. The union of the latter section, with which it is proposed here specially to deal, is an exceptionally powerful body, but the masters also have a strong association, and the general relations are fairly harmonious, as is shown by the fact that the two organisations meet once a year and mutually arrange terms for the next twelve months. On the other hand, the restrictions imposed by the men's union have always been very onerous, and they are now proving seriously detrimental to the well-being of the trade. These remarks apply more particularly to the question of apprentices. The employers do not seek to increase the proportion of apprentices to the number of journeymen, but

they do complain most strongly that under the operation of trade union law, understood rather than written, it is practically impossible for apprentices to learn the trade. Even a manufacturer, it is declared, would not be allowed to teach it to his own sons. An apprentice must wait until he is out of his time before he can hope to pass through the three grades into which the trade is divided, and he starts learning important parts of the business at an age when he should be quite proficient.

The object of these restrictions is to enable the men to keep a good thing in their own hands. They, at any rate, make no profession of philanthropy in the way of leaving something for others. They work five days a week (representing 46 hours) for a wage of from 45*s.* to 47*s.*, and they have no desire to see too many people brought in. The result of this policy is that if any great expansion were to take place in the trade there would not be enough glass bottle makers in the country to meet it. It is even declared that, if a manufacturer wanted to start a new furnace next year, he would not be able to do it for lack of labour. Nor is this all, for a further effect of the action of the men in regard to apprentices, and of the other restrictions imposed, is

to be seen in a marked deterioration in the skill of the workers—a deterioration that is likely to become even worse in the future than it is already unless something is done to check it. It seems strange to hear that the masters are now asking the men's union to "allow them" to make such modifications in the system of working as will permit of the apprentices being better taught. It is further alleged against the men that they will not work otherwise than according to stereotyped Yorkshire customs. They will not, for instance, work where there are machines, and the machines have therefore to be kept to special houses. So an opening has been afforded for the introduction into this country of a large number of German bottles, made on lines which the Yorkshire workers will not adopt.

Still another direction in which trade unionism is exercising a pernicious influence in the glass bottle trade is in the rule that there is to be no difference in the rate of pay among men in the same department. Not only are the masters prevented from encouraging the steady and competent worker, but the latter, in turn, has no incentive to keep above the level of the individual who has little skill and less energy—who spoils an enormous amount of glass while he is

at work, and whose thoughts during the week are fixed less on his duties than on the football match which is to take place on the Saturday. In this way there is being brought about a still further deterioration in the skill of the Yorkshire glass bottle makers, compared with what it was twenty or thirty years ago.

THE BLACK BOTTLE TRADE

SOME developments which are remarkable, if not altogether unique, in their way, have recently arisen as the outcome of difficulties experienced in the carrying on of that distinct branch of the glass industry which deals with the making of "black" bottles, used mainly for wine. The branch in question was introduced into this country 150 years ago by Lord Delavel, who brought over from Germany a number of Hanoverian bottle-blowers, and started some works adjacent to his mansion at Seaton Sluice, Northumberland, for the manufacture of black glass bottles, his main idea being to utilise some inferior qualities of coal which he had mined on his estate. At that time, it may be remarked in passing, the black colour of the bottles was the natural result of the materials used. Since then other materials have been adopted, and these, by themselves, would produce a glass which is transparent; but wine drinkers are so accustomed to having their wine in dark

bottles that the black colour has been kept to, and is now produced by artificial means. Lord Delavel's enterprise was so successful that other factories were started, and at one time there were a dozen places in the North of England where black glass bottles were made, some of them being very important concerns indeed. The *employés* at these different works were among the first in the country to form a trade union, and it became the distinct policy of this union to adhere, with as little change as possible, to the original method of making black bottles, as introduced by Lord Delavel. This method was hard to acquire, and it involved a severe tax on the energies of the workers as compared with an improved and much simpler process adopted in Germany since the introduction of the industry here. It was extremely difficult to teach the English trade to apprentices, and it was difficult, also, to find men with constitutions sufficiently strong to endure the strain involved by the old-fashioned methods. But the men's union would sanction none but the old style of working, so that the members might have the greater chance of retaining the industry in a limited number of hands, which result they further ensured by keeping down the number of apprentices to the lowest possible level. In

this way, too, they thought there would be no danger of any surplus of labour, and no possibility that the employers would pick and choose among the men, taking on only the most competent. So the trade became a sort of close corporation, and the men's union acquired such absolute control that it was able to dictate to the employers all the terms and conditions under which the industry was to be carried on. Owing to the attitude of the trade union and the increase of foreign competition, one after another of the original firms retired from the business rather than attempt to carry it on further under such almost impossible conditions, until at last only three of the dozen remained; and the Germans, with their improved methods and cheaper production, practically captured the market.

A few years ago, however, there was begun at North Woolwich a bold and valiant attempt alike to circumvent the tactics of the men's union and to re-establish on a sounder footing a once flourishing trade, then so steadily dwindling away. Finding the English workers still opposed to the improved German methods, Messrs. Moore & Nettlefold hit upon the expedient of bringing over skilled glass-blowers from Germany, and conducting an English factory on English soil with

the help of German workmen following German methods. This line of policy was followed up by them with every prospect of distinct success. At the time that these lines are being written they employ at their North Woolwich works no fewer than 150 foreign workpeople, mostly Germans, although there is a certain proportion of Austrians, Italians, French, Poles, and Russians as well; and as those who are married have brought their wives and children with them, and even, in some cases, various other relatives in addition, a foreign colony of about 800 souls has sprung up around the works. Each glass-blower works six shifts of eight hours each per week, against the trade union system of five shifts of ten hours each, the former arrangement allowing of the furnaces being worked continuously day and night. The men are paid by the piece, getting from 10 to 15 per cent. more than the union rate of wages, and some of them earn from £2 to £3 a week; whereas, although they are skilled workmen, it was a struggle for most of them to get 30*s.* a week in their own country. They are steady workers, amenable to discipline, and, though they have formed a trade union among themselves, they show a disposition both to allow the employers to manage the works, and also to

establish any claim they may advance to further "rights" by first acquitting themselves well of their own obligations towards their masters. There is no doubt that a large proportion of the newcomers will remain in this country, and already the colony is so well established that the local registrar of births and deaths has issued notices printed in German and French explaining the requirements of the English registration laws, while certain local shopkeepers are sending out bills in these languages calling attention to their wares. The effect of the importation of these foreign workers into the district was that a sum of £350 was distributed among them in wages every week which would otherwise represent money going to Germany for glass bottles made in that country.

The works which constitute this very practical revolt against English trade union methods compete with German importations rather than with the few British survivors who still carry on the industry in the North of England. The output there is nearly all for local consumption, while those survivors are still subject more or less to trade union law. But the expedient of resorting to German workers, who are to manufacture in this country according to German methods, is affording a far better opportunity of

meeting German competition, and the results of the enterprise will probably be watched with no little interest, more especially as the principle may be found capable of much wider application than to the black bottle trade alone. It should be added, however, that the works in question have not been run entirely with foreign labour. There has been an equal number of Englishmen employed in various departments, the foreigners being put on only where they are specially needed, on account either of their skill or of their willingness to adopt the improved methods which British trade unionists would not sanction.

Even in these latter directions it is hoped, should an expansion of the works become necessary at some future time, to avoid bringing in still more foreigners by having a number of English apprentices trained by the German hands. Here, however, the great difficulty is to get steady, desirable lads, who possess alike a sense of discipline and a willingness to keep to the work they take up.

THE FLINT-GLASS TRADE

REFERENCE has yet to be made to a branch of the British glass trades which is the most highly skilled of them all, and is also the one in which trade union action is the most despotic. In the words of one employer, who has spent his life in the trade: "Take the worst features of every union in existence, make of them one repressive code, and then you will get some idea of what the National Flint-Glass Makers' Society of Great Britain and Ireland is like." This has the appearance of being the language of prejudice and exaggeration. Whether it is so or not may be judged from the following statement of facts.

The flint-glass industry is that branch of the glass trades which deals with the manufacture of table-glass of all kinds, fancy vases, épergnes, and decorated coloured glass in general, as well as glass shades and globes for gas lighting, electric lighting, and lamps. The chief centre of the industry is Stourbridge, Worcestershire,

but there are a few flint-glass houses also in Scotland, London, Manchester, and elsewhere. With, probably, only one exception, the whole of the houses making flint-glass employ union men, and the union is one of the most powerful of labour societies, as well as one of the most domineering in its general policy. To its action in the restriction of output, in imposing obnoxious and oppressive rules, and in other ways, is mainly attributed the fact that a once-thriving British industry has been brought within measurable distance of extinction. Every year sees the closing of more and more flint-glass houses, and this has been going on for many years. An old manufacturer near Stourbridge came to a disastrous end in the early part of 1901, and it was openly declared by some of the men in the trade that the manufacturer in question had been "entirely ruined by his own *employés*." Since then a well-known glass house in North Staffordshire has closed its gates, and two houses at Birmingham, which at one time employed a large number of hands on flint-glass manufacture, have abandoned the industry. These are merely a few recent examples. Twenty-five years ago there were probably fifty flint-glass manufactories in full work in this country. To-day it would be difficult to count twenty, and in a number

of these the output is not more than half what it formerly was. All this time the importation of foreign-made flint-glass has been advancing by leaps and bounds. It has been estimated that nine-tenths of the flint-glass now sold in this country comes from abroad, while in some departments of the trade the foreign makers have also captured the whole of the markets in our British possessions, in South America, in Russia, in Spain, and in other countries. The troubles of the British manufacturers have been the opportunity of the foreigners, so that, while the flint-glass factories of the United Kingdom have been steadily reduced to a score, those of Germany and Austria may now be counted by the hundred.

To make it clear how the action of a trade union can have helped to bring about consequences so deplorable as those here described, it is necessary, in the first place, to explain the somewhat complicated conditions under which the trade is carried on. A flint-glass house employing forty glass-blowers, or "workmen," would divide the men into two different sets, each taking six-hour turns. In the making of every article produced there are five workers—the "boy," the "apprentice," the "footmaker," the "servitor," and the "workman"—and these

five constitute, in the order of precedence named, what is technically known as a "chair" of men. One of the peculiarities of the trade, and one of the greatest grievances of the employers, is that the men themselves fix the precise amount of work that shall be done in the six-hour turn. In the case of an established design the "number" is given by the union officials in the district, and becomes a "district number." In the case of a new design the master is allowed to ask his own men how many they will consent to produce in a turn, and a half-hour's discussion may follow, in which the men will show a tendency to get as low a number arranged as possible, while the employer will try to get as high a number as he can. But the employer is practically in the hands of his men, and, as a rule, the outcome of the discussion will be the fixing of an amount of work which can be got through in about four hours, the men going home when they have done it, although they are paid for six hours' labour.

This affects the employer more than may appear on the surface, inasmuch as in few, if any, industries are the working charges so great in proportion to the nature of the industry. The furnace must be kept at full heat, there are men employed about the glass house who

are unproductive, and the expenses have to be borne entirely by the amount of work produced. By way of illustration reference may be made to a typical case. A certain glass article, largely in use, had been made by the men at the "number" of 80 per turn. At one time English flint-glass manufacturers held their own all over the world in regard to this particular article; but the making of it was taken up by various Continental firms, who managed to capture the market. It so happened that the 80 in question, though regarded by the men as six hours' work, were really done by them in about three hours and three-quarters, and could have been produced in even less time. At last one employer called his men together, told them how the trade in the said article was being lost to the country, and begged them to increase the "number." They agreed to make 100 in their six-hour turn instead of the previous 80—a concession which allowed of much of the trade being recovered. But the friendly and decidedly wise arrangement thus arrived at between the employer and his men led to an incident which even those who are best informed in the ways of trade unionism will think incredible. A prominent official of the men's national union wrote to the employer to the effect that, inasmuch

as he had not been consulted with respect to the arrangement made with the men, the old number would have to be adhered to, and unless that were done all the men in the works would be withdrawn at the end of fourteen days. The firm replied, through their solicitor, resenting the official's interference, and threatening him with legal proceedings if any loss or injury should be sustained by reason of his action. Thereupon the official intimated that he "withdrew" the notices.

Almost, if not quite, as incredible is the fact that in the flint-glass trade an employer is not allowed to choose his own *employés*. If he did so the whole body of men would be withdrawn, and his works stopped. When a flint-glass employer wants an additional hand he must write to the district secretary of the men's union and ask him to send him one. He may suggest the person he would like to have, but the probability is that the district secretary will ignore his suggestion, and send him either the individual who stands first on the unemployed list, or else somebody he wants to get off the books. District secretary and employer alike may be perfectly aware that the person in question is absolutely incompetent, but the employer is bound to take him for at least fourteen days;

and it has often happened that, when there has been friction between the district secretary and an employer, a man has been sent to whom wages are duly paid for the fortnight, though it is deemed prudent not to allow him to do a stroke of work, lest he should waste good material. On one occasion a firm who had dismissed a dangerously incompetent workman sent to the local secretary as usual, and received the very man they had just discharged, being bound to put him on for another fourteen days before they could get rid of him again.

The same arbitrary powers are exercised by the union officials in regard to apprentices. Everything possible has been done by them to prevent new blood from being brought into the trade, their motive being, apparently, to strengthen their own position, and to make sure of work being found for the unemployed, however in-efficient the latter may be. More than this, they take away the reward to which smart and capable young fellows are entitled. When a youth has served his apprenticeship he naturally looks forward to being promoted to the next higher position in the "chair"—that of "footmaker." But the employer is not allowed to grant such promotion without the consent of the trade union officials, and,

however great may be his desire to do justice to the youth, it may happen that every impediment is put in his way. The usual course of procedure is for the trade union secretary to reply to the employer that, inasmuch as there are so many footmakers out of employment, the society "does not see its way" to consent to the promotion of the apprentice, and if the employer really wants another footmaker the society will send him one. So it may come about that a young man of twenty-three is still receiving practically the same wages as he had when he was serving his time.

The claim is even made that an apprentice shall not be taken on in the first instance without the consent, not only of the men in the works, but also of the union officials. A short time ago an employer who had the right to one more apprentice, according to the rules of the society, accepted a lad of whom his own men had formally approved, and the boy was duly indentured. The next day the district official went to the works, called the boy to him, and said, "Clear out, and go home." Then, turning to the men, he told them he could not allow the boy to work, the reason being that the master and the lad's father had not first consulted him. The employer stood his ground,

but the union punished the father—himself a member—by fining him £5.

Another illustration of the truculent tactics of the union officials is shown by an incident which occurred at Brierley Hill a few years ago. A local firm was asked by the society to re-employ a man discharged by them fourteen months previously, on account of conduct which even the society could not uphold. An appeal was made to the feelings of the firm because of the man's family, and after some hesitation they agreed to reinstate him; but the man refused to accept the lower position to which they were willing to appoint him, though this would still have brought him in 56*s.* per week. Not only did the society support him in his claim to be put in his former position, but they gave the employers notice that, if they refused this claim, the whole of the men in their employ would be brought out!

A still further insight into the working of the union is given by the following extracts from the official organ, *The Flint-Glass Makers' Magazine*, under the heading "Names of Members in Arrears":

——— owes £2 fine for leaving a place of work without consent of the district, which caused an apprentice to be put on.

———— owes £2 to the trade for leaving one district and going to another, after warning and without consent. Now working in ————.

It may be wondered why the men themselves should be willing to become practically the slaves of their union officials, responding to their every beck and call, though one would suppose that some of the things that are done must be repugnant to every one possessed of any sense of justice or a single spark of manliness. It is known, indeed, that some of the men are far from satisfied; but the great hold which the union officials possess over them is to be found in that part of the organisation which deals with infirm and aged workmen. From the time he joins the society each member must pay a subscription ranging from 6*d.* to 2*s.*, or even 3*s.*, a week. For this the members receive in their old age a small weekly payment, which is out of all proportion to the total amount they have paid in, but is, nevertheless, the one thing to which they look forward to keep them out of the workhouse. Some of the men have been practically paying into the society all their working life, and they now feel that, whatever they are called upon by the union officials to do, they must obey rather than run the risk of losing alike their employment and their

prospective benefits. Unfortunately, too, there is the danger of a certain amount of intimidation being shown as well towards those who are troubled with scruples of conscience. A man who once had the boldness to speak strongly in favour of his employer, who was being vigorously abused, at a meeting of the society, was caught hold of, carried out of the room, and dropped over the balusters on to the stairs, down which he rolled from top to bottom, getting, as he afterwards declared, "black and blue all over." So it comes about, as the result of all these conditions, that the men are drifting into a condition of apathy, if not of lethargy, which is having a disastrous effect on the whole trade. Many of them speak and act as though they realised that the industry is doomed, and the common expression among them, when such things are discussed, is, "Well, it will last my time."

The combined effect of forcing the, perhaps, inefficient, unemployed on the masters, in preference to allowing the introduction of fresh recruits, and of the lethargy just spoken of, is a steady deterioration in the capacity of many of the workers. High wages are paid, for the men get from 30*s.* to 70*s.* for a week which nominally consists of 48 hours, but actually is not often

more than 42. Yet, in spite of such wages as these, and in spite of the large number of unemployed, there is such a positive dearth of good workmen that in the Stourbridge district —the very headquarters of the industry—it is positively declared that there are at the present time not more than four or five men possessed of the skill and dexterity necessary to turn out a certain class of articles for which, in days gone by, Great Britain was famed all the world over. People to whom such deplorable truths are brought home, and who see the steady closing of one flint-glass works after another, may well find cause for fear that the doom of one of the most interesting of British industries, and one that formerly gave employment to thousands of workpeople, is sealed, and that, too, for no other apparent reason than because the officials of a trade union are taking every step open to them that is calculated to bring about its destruction. It is not so long since "An Unfortunate Glass-Master" wrote, in a letter to a provincial paper:

> So senseless is the attitude of the workmen's leaders, and so much do they seem to arrange beforehand for embarrassing the masters, that the only conclusion left to a glass-master is that some of the leaders could not do worse if they were secretly subsidised by the German glass-hands to ruin the English trade.

With regard to possible remedies, a resort to foreign labour is regarded as impracticable, because—as experience has already shown—of the intimidation that would be practised by the unionists, and a resort to free labour is also considered to be impracticable, because of the high degree of skill required in the flint-glass trade as compared with other branches of the glass industry. There is certainly the possibility that, if the masters took a bold and united stand against the men's society, they might bring it to reason in the course of a few months; but it can only delicately be suggested that there are reasons why some of the employers who have suffered most in the struggle to keep the industry going should not feel equal to the adoption of this course. All the same, there are sanguine spirits among them who think the trade might even yet be saved, provided that certain conditions were granted. They ask, in the first place, that the men should make a fair quantity of goods in their six-hour turns. Any increase in the production over and above a certain standard means a profit to the employer, either because he has more goods to sell at the old price, or because he is enabled to reduce the price and thus occupy a better position in the world's markets. Instead of the

men, as at present, fixing "numbers" which will enable them to leave off work long before their six hours have expired, they should be willing to give such numbers as will fairly occupy them for the whole time. An employer who found that large quantities of a certain article were wanted for India asked his workmen what "number" they would make in their six hours. They said they would do 100. In order to make sure of a profit it was necessary for the employer that they should produce at least 150 in a turn, but they absolutely refused to attempt any such number, although they could have made from 170 to 180 in the six hours without over-straining themselves. They declined to do more than 100, and the order went to the Continent, where glass workers are quite content to put in longer hours for less money.

The second condition is that the employer should have the right to engage whatever men he pleases, without being compelled to accept those who are sent to him by the trade union officials; the third is that he should be allowed to put on more apprentices, having the right to engage them himself, without having first to seek the approval both of his men and of the union officials; whilst the fourth and last of this very reasonable list of suggestions is that

the manufacturer should have a perfectly free hand in regard to the particular classes of goods he makes. The meaning of this is that, under the present system, whenever one set of men in a flint-glass house leave off work, from any cause whatever, all the rest of the men leave off as well; so that, in order to keep things going, the employer is often obliged to order a number of articles which he really does not want.

If action should be taken, and taken promptly, along such lines as those here given, there might still be some hope of saving the industry; but in any case, the reader will probably have concluded by this time that there was really no exaggeration in the manufacturer's remarks quoted at the outset of this decidedly dreary story.

THE BIRMINGHAM BRASS TRADES

COMPLAINT is often made against trade unions that they are too disposed to look solely at the individual interests of the worker, without regard to the conditions of the economic situation, and especially of such factors therein as foreign competition and the results that competition must have upon the prices of the goods on which the worker is engaged. Recent experiences in those brass trades which form one of the staple industries in the Birmingham district would suggest that the allegation in question is not made without good cause. Among the numerous manufacturers themselves there is a normal degree of competition quite keen enough in its way; but they have common enemies in American, and more especially in German, rivals. This foreign competition might, certainly, become much more severe than it is, and it might even be extremely serious if the foreign maker were to copy exactly the contour or pattern of English-made brass goods manufactured for the English

home trade. Happily, a considerable portion of the foreign supplies bear indication of their foreign origin, and are easily recognised as German or American; and in the brass trades, at least, it is found that English people, with their conservative English instincts, are still sufficiently patriotic to pay even a little more for an English-made article, provided the difference in price is not too great. Thus far, at least, there is a redeeming feature in the situation.

But, though the foreign competition may not yet be extremely serious, it is undoubtedly severe, and the manufacturer to-day must be content with a very small profit on individual articles, depending for his gain on the possibility of turning out very large quantities. In the trade in electrical accessories, for instance, prices are cut so fine that there is hardly any profit at all. The development of the electric light has attained to so much greater proportions in Germany than in Great Britain that the makers of accessories in the former country have a distinct advantage over those in the latter. The German manufacturer will buy English china, mount his own brass-work thereon, and send the complete article here, beating the English maker in his own market. A leading manufacturer says that when he has told his

men of such things as this, and shown them the foreign-made articles, the men have simply given him an incredulous smile, without in any way realising the gravity of the position. Then there is the case of the electric light lamp-holder, which is to the electric light what the burner is to the gas-bracket. At one time the manufacturer was protected in this country by a patent, and the holder sold for 1*s.* 8*d.* But the patent was not in force in Germany, and, as soon as it expired here, the German makers so flooded the English markets with their holders that the price was at once reduced from 1*s.* 8*d.* to 4*d.*

These are just a few illustrations of what foreign competition has done in the brass trades; yet, in face of such facts, the National Society of the Amalgamated Brass-Workers presented to the employers a series of demands which, in the opinion of those employers, could not have been conceded without endangering the very existence of the industry. Not only was a *minimum* wage demanded for adults, but the society asked that it should be fixed at what the employers regarded as an "enormously" high figure—namely, 6*d.* per hour, *plus* 20 per cent., representing a *minimum* wage of 35*s.* per week for every worker over twenty-one. The employers represented that, while some men of twenty-one might be worth

£4 a week, there were others who were worth little or nothing, and that to give a *minimum* wage of the proportions demanded would so send up the cost of production as to deprive them of any hope they might retain of being able to meet the foreigner at all. There were various other things asked for as well, such as a limitation of the hours to 54 per week (this the employers were willing to grant), and the imposing of hard-and-fast restrictions as to the number of under-hands and also of boys to be employed in each factory.

Seeing the trade, as they thought, threatened with ruin, the employers raised a fund among themselves and took various steps in defence of their position. There was already a masters' association for each branch of the trade, representatives of the different branches forming a joint committee. Eventually it was agreed to refer the whole matter to arbitration, and Sir David Dale, of Darlington, was appointed by the Board of Trade for that purpose. The employers put before the arbitrator a mass of facts bearing on the harm that must result from the fixing of so high a *minimum* wage and the limiting of juvenile and under-hand labour, pointing out that in many cases the Germans and Americans were importing brass goods at a cheaper

rate than that at which they could be made in Birmingham. If, it was added, any award were fixed under which the selling price of the English-made goods would have to be increased, the English trade would be not only crippled, but absolutely wiped out. On the other hand, the case for the men, as presented through their union officials, showed a disposition to ignore the subject of foreign competition, and to set out the interests of the workers alone. In the result the arbitrator's award, given at the end of 1900, was against the men on practically every point but the limitation of hours to 54. A *minimum* wage was fixed, but it was put at $4\frac{1}{2}d.$ per hour, *plus* 20 per cent., instead of at the higher rate which had been demanded; while the arbitrator refused to interfere with the proportions of juvenile labour and of underhands. The award was duly accepted by each side, and, in the view of the employers, the Birmingham brass trades were, for the time being, at least, saved from the annihilation with which they had been threatened.

THE BIRMINGHAM TINPLATE TRADE

In the Birmingham tinplate trade the effect of the working of a very short-sighted trade union policy has been to the direct prejudice, not so much of that industry itself, as of the trade unionists. The trade referred to occupies a leading position among the industries of the Midlands, and at one time the skilled tinplate worker—who produced a finished article from the raw material with the help only of ordinary tools—was a person who deserved to rank among the best workmen of his day. Later experiences have shown, however, that, in view of the large quantities of tinplate goods required, and the comparatively low prices at which they must be produced in order to meet foreign competition, old-fashioned methods must be modified to meet present-day requirements, and greater economy secured in the processes of manufacture.

One of the directions in which such economy

was found possible was in the supplementing of male by female labour. There were certain stages in the production of tinplate goods which could be managed quite as well by women as by men, and the difference in the wages made this fact an important consideration to the manufacturer. Thus, men were employed to set the presses, but women were put on to do the press work, and they showed in it a dexterity which no male worker could surpass. Men, in fact, did not take kindly to the idea of spending their lives in putting pieces of tin under a press to be stamped into particular shapes, and they were quite willing to allow the women to take up this branch of the work. But the manufacturers found that women could do the soldering as well, and that they did it with a degree of neatness to which comparatively few of the men could attain. Women were also put on to do the riveting; but there were other stages where male labour was thought desirable. It is, however, one of the hard-and-fast rules of the Tinplate Workers' Association that work begun by either men or women should be completed by them, without any passing from the one to the other. The association is also keen on the subject of limiting the number of boys and under-hands employed.

An especially significant example of its action is afforded by what it once did in the case of a Midland firm, which produces every year 500 gross of "hurricane" lanterns, of the type used by the natives of India. At that time the firm in question employed both men and women on the work, according to the different stages; but the union officials came down upon them with a declaration that certain processes which the women were doing were men's work, and should be left to them; and they made a further demand that the firm should employ only one boy to every four men, instead of two to every four. It so happened that German competition in the making of this particular lantern was very keen, and the firm represented to the union officials that to concede their demands would greatly increase the cost of production, so that there would be no margin left for profit. "Then you had better increase the price of your lanterns," was the characteristic reply of the union officials, with an apparently blind indifference to the fact that to adopt this course—merely out of regard for trade union scruples—would render it impossible for the firm to meet their German competitors, and leave them no alternative but to give up the trade altogether.

The firm gave the officials every opportunity

for showing that their claims could be conceded without ruining the industry, but they failed to do so, and in the end the firm cut themselves free from trade union interference by giving notice to the whole of their union hands, taking back, however, those who were willing to work according to the wishes of their employers. Meantime the firm had made the discovery that women were quite competent to turn out the lantern in question themselves, without any need whatever to resort to the assistance of men. This discovery was the direct outcome of the action of the union officials, and from that time the 500 gross of lanterns per year have been produced solely by female labour. As the women get 14*s.* or 15*s.* a week, in place of the 35*s.* to 40*s.* per week given to the men, and as they turn out the lanterns almost as quickly as the men, and, in some respects, do their work even better, the result to the firm has been distinctly beneficial, while the outcome of the trade union interference has been distinctly detrimental to the welfare of the unionists themselves. Of those of the men who had to leave their employment, and who kept faithful to their union, many were walking the streets for months—at the cost, no doubt, of the union funds—before they got work elsewhere.

There is another firm which manufactures, among other things, a cart candle lamp of so neat a design that, provided the price be kept down, it has a fair chance of competing with the cheaper but less attractive German lamp of the same class. The firm put women on to do most of the work, and they, too, found that the women did the soldering more neatly than the men. But they wanted a man to fix in the coloured glass at the back of the lamp, to see that the riveting had been properly done, and to look at other details where masculine skill and judgment seemed desirable. So they appointed a man at day wage, giving him the trade union rate of wages, and the man was well satisfied with his post; but the trade union secretary intimated that the arrangement could not be allowed, and the firm gave way rather than have any trouble. The man lost his place, and the work is now done entirely by women and youths.

Another manufacturer introduced a machine for riveting cycle lamps, but put a tinman on to the work rather than dislodge him, although no skilled labour was required. The tinman got tired of the job and left it, and the manufacturer then put two odd men in the tinman's place. The society objected, and threatened to call out

all its members. The employer surrendered, but soon effected such a re-arrangement in his works that he was able to dispense with men altogether and employ only women. This is an illustration of a very distinct change that has been proceeding of late years in the tinplate trade. There has been increased inducement to employers to introduce more and more machinery, wherever possible, in order to overcome the restrictive tactics of the men's union. Even in a new trade like that of bicycle accessories, the union wanted to impose old-fashioned rules and demands that were quite out of date, and this, too, although the margin of possible profit on the articles in question is almost infinitesimal. The manufacturers have, consequently, resorted to the use of automatic machinery similar to that employed in the United States, and union hands are no longer wanted in this branch at all.

To attempt to conduct the tinplate trade according to the ideas of the men's union would mean that the employers—who already have to keep their prices to the lowest possible level—would not be able to compete with the foreigner at all. At present they themselves manage to hold their own, more or less; but the whole effect of the policy of the tinplate workers'

union is to threaten with complete extinction the skilled tinman as known to British industry a generation ago, and to substitute for him an assortment of machines worked or supplemented by women, youths, and unskilled labour.

GUNMAKERS AND TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION

THERE is still another Birmingham trade to which reference should be made, inasmuch as it affords an illustration of the natural antipathy that certain types of trade union officials seem to entertain towards any scheme proposed by employers which may have the effect of bringing about the increased efficiency of those engaged in their particular industry. The trade in question is the Birmingham gun trade—that is to say, the trade in the manufacture of sporting guns, as distinguished from that in military rifles carried on in such factories as that of the Birmingham Small Arms Company. The system of apprenticeship has died out in the trade, and such is the position of affairs that there is an absolute dearth of skilled hands. There is plenty of "middle class" labour—that is, of men who can earn from 25*s.* to 30*s.* a week; but of really skilled men, worth their £2 or their £2 5*s.*, there is declared to be not

one to spare. There is no doubt that the development of the cycle trade has had a great deal to do with bringing about this scarcity, the skilled gunmakers leaving their own trade for the other; but the chief cause has been the distinct lack of adequate facilities for giving to youths such a degree of training in gun-making as will enable them to develop into really skilled workers. The system hitherto in vogue has been for lads to begin as errand-boys for some of the workmen in the factories, to work occasionally at the vice, and then gradually to rise to one particular branch. But the sole interest which the master-workman has in such a boy is to get all the use he can out of him, to his own immediate profit, and it is not to be expected that he will spend too much of his time in giving him an all-round experience, or in explaining to him technical details for educational purposes only. Thus, unless the lad is exceptionally sharp, or is under an especially conscientious master-workman, he grows up only a second-class hand, and never attains to the rank of a really skilful worker.

A different policy has been adopted on the Continent, and in Germany and Belgium, more especially, some very successful schools of gun-making have been established. At Liége there is

one where 140 boys receive a systematic practical training in the art of making guns. In view of the increasing competition in the gun trade, one would naturally assume that, if the manufacturers here are to hold their own against Continental rivals, there should be no falling off in the comparative efficiency of the workmen. There has been the greater need for action because of an apparently increasing disinclination on the part of boys to enter the trade under the old conditions, while no boy can hope to develop into a highly skilled worker in a less period than five years.

With the view of providing for what thus seemed to be a distinct need, the guardians of the Birmingham Proof-house inserted in a Bill which they brought into Parliament, to amend the Gun Barrel Proof Act, 1868, clauses which would allow them to expend on practical training in gunmaking certain accumulated funds under their control, amounting altogether to about £20,000. Thereupon the Gunmakers' Union claimed that, inasmuch as this provision was to be made for educational purposes, the workmen should be allowed to have three nominees on the Proof-house Board of Guardians. This body is, as specified by Act of Parliament, essentially one of employers only, and the guardians

declined to concede the point asked for. The Gunmakers' Union—which, it may be mentioned, does not include in its ranks the best class of workmen, and has little or no weight with the employers—persisted in its demand, for which it managed to gain such support before the Parliamentary Committee that the guardians dropped the Bill altogether. But they did not abandon their educational scheme. Declaring that they were already empowered by Act of Parliament to devote their surplus funds to promoting the interests of the trade, they proposed at the annual meeting of the trade in 1901 that classes for teaching practically the art of gunmaking should be started on an experimental scale. This was unanimously agreed to, and the Gunmakers' Union was invited to act on the particular body which would have the supervision of these classes. Then the officials of the union showed their hand. They had been offered 25 per cent. of the representation, but they refused all co-operation on the ground (1) that the guardians aimed at flooding the trade with workmen, to the disadvantage of those at present employed in it; (2) that they aimed at cheapening labour, in order that they might be able to make the lowest class of guns, similar to those imported

from Belgium; and (3) that practical teaching could best be given in the workshops. After what has been already said it is hardly worth while to enter on a detailed discussion of these three allegations. The first of them, however, is sufficiently answered by the fact that, out of the first twenty-five boys received into the classes —which were formally opened in two rooms at the Proof-house, Banbury-street, Birmingham, in the autumn of 1901 — twenty-one were already in the trade. What opinion should be formed of the whole course of action taken in the matter by the Gunmakers' Union can well be left to the judgment of the reader.

SHEFFIELD TRADES

In most of those "lighter" trades on which, before the advent of armour plates and other such things of the "heavy" type, Sheffield mainly relied for her prosperity, one hears the same story of steady decadence and of a transfer of more or less of the trade into the hands of foreign competitors. For this result hostile tariffs are undoubtedly responsible to a certain extent, but there are various characteristics and peculiarities of the trades in question that render them especially deserving of study.

One of the most striking features in the situation is the breakdown of the apprenticeship system. The old custom of boys being apprenticed to master-workmen at the age of fourteen, and remaining with them until twenty-one, grew into disfavour with such master-workmen because they found that when the apprentices reached the age of eighteen or nineteen, and were beginning to be both useful and profitable, they would yield to the temptation of a few

shillings higher wages, disregard their indentures, and go to work elsewhere—a course they were practically free to take because of a reluctance on the part of the apprentices' masters to enforce their rights, this reluctance being mainly due to the difficulty of obtaining any effective redress. It was short-sighted policy on the part of the apprentices, who gained a temporary advantage, but lost the chance of becoming good all-round workmen, as they might have done had they completed their training; while, as regards the master-workmen, it became more and more difficult to get them to take apprentices whom they could not depend on keeping.

Coupled with these adverse conditions, there was the fixed policy of the trade unions, almost without exception, to reduce to the lowest possible limits the entrance of newcomers into the different occupations, so as to keep lucrative industries in the hands of those already engaged in them, to maintain a high rate of wages, to ensure that there would always be employment for those in possession, and to give to the workers a greater power of control over the employers generally. And when reference is made to Sheffield trade unions it must be borne in mind that in the "lighter" industries

there is a different union for each process in the making of each class of articles. It is not enough, for instance, that there should be a forgers' union. There is a separate and distinct union for table-knife forgers, pen-knife forgers, scissors forgers, razor forgers, file forgers, and so on with other processes and other goods. Thus the men employed by a single manufacturer may be members of twenty different unions, most of which guard with the greatest jealousy the demarcations of their own work, and would not make the slightest concession either to the members of another union or to their common employer. Most of these unions are small in numbers, and have not much in the way of accumulated funds, so that if at any time the employers really wanted to gain the mastery over them, and would only agree to combine, and to support the weaker ones among themselves, it should be quite possible for them to succeed. But, though the trade unions may be small individually, they agree collectively on two things—first, in wanting to keep their trades, as far as possible, in the hands of those who are in it; and secondly, in practically retaining the power to fix the rate of wages. The first aspiration they secure by either prohibiting the taking on of apprentices

altogether for a stated period, or by limiting them to the sons of those already in the trade or to a very small number of outsiders; the second aim they realise by working (on piece wages) according to more or less ancient "statements" for established articles, bargaining with their employers when new patterns are introduced, but varying these "standard" rates for different factories according to the amount they think they can get out of individual firms.

Thus the plea that trade unions are useful because they establish a recognised rate of pay for the whole trade, so placing one manufacturer on the same level as another, does not apply in the case of Sheffield. In that town the unions may accept variations in the rate of pay in different houses in the same trade to a very considerable extent, the higher rates being imposed on the large concerns, and the lower on the small masters; and, as the small masters are numerous, the effect is to make them, in the aggregate, strong competitors of the important establishments, and render difficult any real combination on the part of the whole body of employers. There is another respect, too, in which the men can play off one employer against another. Owing to the organised shortage of labour, a master who wants an additional hand

can, in certain of the trades, only hope to get one by inducing an *employé* from some other establishment to join his service. But the men know their market value, and hence it is the practice in several industries to give a man a bounty of up to £10 on his taking over a new place. In other words he gets a bribe of £10 to leave one employer and go to another.

Add to this shortage of labour and to this keeping up of wages an almost unyielding opposition to machinery, and it will be understood how handicapped the employers in the "lighter" Sheffield trades have been. Sheffield goods retain their fame all the world over, and the demand for them is generally more or less active; but the employers find it difficult to execute the orders they receive, and the goods that cannot be made in Sheffield are obtained elsewhere, with the result that where the balance goes the bulk generally follows. Twenty or thirty years ago the orders for this balance went mostly to Germany, because of the cheaper labour there; to-day the great competitor, in various lines, is America. Manufacturers in the United States lay down machinery which enables them to turn out vast quantities of articles at a very low rate; they sell in their own protected markets, at a good profit, goods that have cost

less to produce because of the enormous output, and they can well afford to keep their machinery running, and send their surplus either to Great Britain or to the British colonies to be disposed of at cost price, covering themselves, and making it impossible for the British producers (especially under the particular circumstances narrated above) to compete with them; while our own manufacturers are shut out from the home markets of their successful rivals by reason of hostile tariffs. A number of Sheffield trades are seriously affected in this way, and there would seem to be abundant reason for some degree of joint action on the part of employers and employed in those trades, in a recognition of their community of interest, for the purpose of doing what is possible to overcome the difficulties of the situation.

BRITANNIA-METAL SMITHS

To pass from the general to the particular, it may be of interest to show what is the actual position of affairs in some of the more representative trades; and as a type of the trade unions concerned reference may be made to the Britannia-Metal Smiths' Provident Society. The union is said to have only between 300 and 400 members, and it is in the hands of this number

of men that it seeks to keep the Britannia-metal smiths' trade of Sheffield. According to the employers the trade is seriously underhanded, and there are not enough men to do the business. Foreign competition has made serious inroads into the industry; yet, if a sudden influx of orders came to hand, there would not be enough workers to execute them.

How the men's society seeks to limit the number of hands in the trade is shown by the following extracts from its rules in reference to apprentices:

> No journeyman shall take an apprentice, except such be his own or a journeyman's son, who must be under seventeen years of age, but he cannot have an apprentice in addition to his own son or sons. No man shall take a lad to work with him until he is himself twenty-five years of age.
>
> No master shall have more than one apprentice at one time; if two or more partners they can have one each; and for limited company's (*sic*) for the first ten men, or fractional part thereof, one boy; from eleven to twenty-five men, two boys; and so raising one boy to every fifteen additional men.

But it would seem that this latter rule was considered too generous; for in 1892 the right of employers to have apprentices was suspended for five years, and in 1897 the suspension was renewed for another five years. The result has been to impose on the employers a great injustice,

especially in view of the insufficiency of labour, while men have to be employed, at men's wages, to do odd jobs about the works which otherwise would be done by boys. It is probable that the master metal-smiths will be reduced to the necessity, either of fighting the point with the union, or of relinquishing the trade and leaving it entirely in the hands of their German rivals.

Here are some other of the rules of the Britannia-Metal Smiths' Provident Society, further showing the lines on which it is conducted:

Any man engaging himself to work at a manufactory where there is a dispute, and refusing to leave when requested by a deputation from the committee, or hiring himself so that he cannot leave, shall be fined £5, and shall be compelled to pay the whole sum, as well as any arrears of contribution, before he is allowed to work at any of our places (*sic*). No man shall be allowed to hire himself to any employer, on any pretence whatever.

That no member shall sign any document detrimental to our rules.

Any man making a new article must have it priced by the whole of the men in the factory, and not by himself, under a penalty of £1, and the price set by himself will not be acknowledged.

Members seeking work must first see the secretary and ascertain if there are any places where men are prohibited from going, and any member applying for a situation before ascertaining this information, or acting contrary

to the secretary's instructions in the case, shall be fined *2s. 6d.*, and any member going to work at a new situation without first obtaining from the secretary his clearance card shall also be fined *2s. 6d.*, the card to be given to the factory collector, who shall ask for it. Clearance cards can only be obtained by members who are clear on the books.

To be "clear on the books" means that all subscriptions to the union have been paid up to date.

SILVERSMITHS

In the silver and electro-plate trades—that is, electro-plate on German silver, as distinct from electro-plate on Britannia-metal—there are the same attempts by the men's union to limit the number of apprentices, and, though the trade has not been reduced to the same small proportions as the Britannia-metal trade, there is a distinct shortage of men. It is declared that of entrée dishes, trays, and other articles which require careful hammering, 30 per cent. more could be produced in Sheffield if only there were enough skilled hammerers to do the work; and, as it happens, the work is of a kind where machinery would be of little avail. It is complained, too, that there is a marked falling off in the quality of the Sheffield silversmiths' work, the men taking less pains with it than in former days;

but this is attributed in good part to the fact that electro-plate will cover many imperfections, whereas when, in the days of the old Sheffield plate, a man accidentally worked through the thin sheet of silver rolled on to copper, which was the material he then used, the whole article was spoiled. The present-day falling off is, indeed, attributed not so much to trade unionism as to the frailties of human nature.

THE CUTLERY TRADES

There are various branches in the cutlery trades, which comprise pen-knives, pocket or jack knives (including daggers, etc.), scissors, razors, and table cutlery, the men in each branch having their separate unions; and these, generally speaking, accept the same policy of making separate terms with individual masters, restricting the labour supply, and so on. The scissors branch, especially, is a typical instance of the failure of a trade to grow. At one time Sheffield occupied a pre-eminent position for its manufacture of scissors; but the trade began to decline in 1875, partly owing to a substantial advance of prices, and partly because of an unwillingness to adopt new methods. In the early days of the Sheffield trade scissors were produced

there by hand-forging from a rod of steel, and the output was consequently limited to the amount of work done by the hand-forgers, who formed a very close union indeed. At that time there was no possibility of getting the scissors except as forged by trade union workers at trade union prices. But the German manufacturers adopted the system of casting scissors, and they followed this up by stamping them, producing so cheap an article that they captured the British colonies —which formerly had their scissors entirely from Sheffield—and obtained a firm hold on the English market as well. Yet, whenever efforts were made to introduce stamping into the Sheffield scissors trade, in place of forging, the grinders' union refused to make any concessions in price on having placed in their hands an article they could finish with less trouble than before. Consequently the Sheffield manufacturer found there would not be a sufficient saving to justify his putting down stamping machinery, and he has had to be content to see the trade drift more and more into the hands of the Germans. It is now said to be dying out in Sheffield. Yet there are not enough men to do even the work that is left, for the number of scissors-makers has substantially decreased, and is much below actual requirements. A grinder

may not take an apprentice until he himself is twenty-eight, and then the youth he takes must be the son of a grinder. So restricted is the supply of labour that sometimes when the employers are in want of extra hands they hardly know which way to turn; while in the matter of wages the men send in word when they want more, and the employers must either concede the advance or prepare for a strike.

THE RAZOR TRADE

Almost the same remarks as those made concerning scissors apply also to razors. Hollow-ground razors are the fashion; and hollow grinding can be done just as well at Sheffield as in Germany. The German manufacturer produces his blanks by stamping with hydraulic presses, and, though there is no saving on this first process, there is a saving on the second, that of grinding. But in Sheffield the razor grinders' union is unwilling to allow for stamped hollow blanks (which represent a substantial decrease of labour for the grinders) any adequate concession, so that here again there is no inducement for the Sheffield manufacturer to put down stamping machinery, and the German competition is unchecked.

THE SAW TRADE

The making of saws was one of the leading industries in Sheffield thirty or forty years ago. To-day the condition of the trade is deplorable. It has been almost completely captured by the manufacturers in the United States. They were the first to put down machines for both grinding and finishing, and while, at first, some of the manufacturers on this side were too slow to see how their transatlantic competitors were going ahead, others who did see, and who sought to introduce similar machinery here, found it bitterly opposed by the men's unions. Such opposition is no longer offered; but, in the meantime, the American makers have got so firm a hold on the world's markets that the Sheffield makers cannot hope to overtake them.

In the United States standardised sizes are turned out by machinery in enormous quantities, and they are sold so cheaply that the home consumers forgo their desire for special sizes,—which, indeed, the manufacturers decline to produce,—and the surplus is sent to England, Canada, or elsewhere to be sold at cost price, or little more. The Sheffield saw-manufacturers are struggling to keep as much of the trade as they can, and for the limited number of men

available there is work enough; but inasmuch as the men, through their union, want to keep that work to themselves, and disapprove of apprentices, it would look as if the industry cannot expect to outlive the present workers.

EDGE TOOLS

Sheffield manufacturers of edge tools, and especially of carpenters' tools, are so heavily handicapped, alike by the American "surplus" system and by the policy of the edge tool grinders' union, that they have little chance of being able to hold their own against foreign competition. In the United States one man does the grinding, which is skilled and heavy work, and another does the polishing, which involves only light and unskilled labour. Sub-divided in this way, the work is turned out better, more quickly, and at less cost than if it were all done by one man. But the Sheffield edge tool grinders have laid down the law that the two processes shall be done by the same man, for the reason both that they think it would be unfair for one person to do all the hard work and another to do all the easy work, and that for a man to take up the polishing after he has done the grinding is "like giving him a rest." That the employer must, in

consequence, have a grinding-wheel twice as large as would otherwise be sufficient; that more space is taken up for the factory, and substantially greater expense incurred; and that the work turned out costs more and is not so well done,—are considerations that do not concern the men's union. So the American makers get a still better chance than they would otherwise have, even under their dumping system, to come here and secure a big slice of the trade. On the Continent, too, the French have captured most of the markets with carpenters' tools which have a much finer finish than the Sheffield makes; though such, it is declared, would not be the case if the Sheffield workers would only follow the American and the French practice, and leave the polishing to be done by men working apart from the grinding.

FILE-MAKING

Still another of the "lighter" Sheffield industries into which the Americans have made serious inroads is that of file-making; and here again the cause is due to the good use to which they have put machinery. American manufacturers took to file-making machinery at once, there being no hand-labour available for

them, and they got a good start before the Sheffield manufacturers, wanting to follow the example thus set, had induced their workpeople to abandon their prejudices to the use of machinery. Even now the Americans obtain a very much better output from the file-cutting machines in proportion to the wages paid than is the case in Sheffield. There is not much trade union restriction among the machine file-cutters, whose society is of very little account (though there is plenty of strong unionism among the file forgers and grinders); and the fact that the English workers of such machines do not give the same intensity of application to them that the American operatives do is attributed rather to a lack of ambition on their part, and to a spirit of contentment which prompts them to be satisfied with the wages they get—such wages ranging from 30*s.* to £3 a week—rather than to try to earn more by working harder. But the comparative prosperity which gives them this spirit of contentment is due solely to the use of that machinery to which they, in their younger days, or their fathers before them, strongly objected; while, but for the introduction of file-cutting machines, the whole industry would, by this time, have been swept away from Sheffield altogether.

THE FUTURE OF THE SHEFFIELD TRADES

In view of the shortage of labour deliberately brought about by the trade unions in most of the "lighter" trades of Sheffield—and this, too, notwithstanding the severity of foreign competition—it would seem to the average person that the trades themselves must die out with the present generation from sheer lack of workers to carry them on. But there is an increasing disposition among the employers not to remain at the mercy of the trade unions, and various remedies are suggested, the chief of which is a greater resort to machinery for the purpose both of securing more freedom and of overcoming the restriction of labour difficulty. Thirty years ago there was practically no machinery in the lighter Sheffield trades, except some power for grinding or polishing, and most of the trades were practically skilled handicrafts which it took a boy a full period of seven years to properly learn. To-day, every fresh trouble that arises, especially in the cutlery trades, is regarded as offering a further incentive to the invention or the adoption of machines which can be worked by more or less unskilled labour. Much has been done in this direction already. Thus, to forge a gross of pen-knife

springs by hand is a fair day's work for a competent man; but there is a machine which will turn out the gross in from ten to fifteen minutes, and the machine-made springs will be more evenly cut than those made by hand.

Other machines akin to this are likely to be introduced in the not far distant future. There are Sheffield men possessed of clear brains, inventive genius, and a determined will, who will not consent to seeing their industries brought to ruin without making a determined effort to preserve them, and machines are being projected to do things for the Sheffield trades which will considerably open the eyes of the old-fashioned workers, who may think their own services cannot be dispensed with. It is quite understood at Sheffield that everything new must be fought for with the unions; but, though not wanting to provoke a revolution, the employers in question will not be afraid of taking practical steps, with a zeal tempered by discretion, to preserve the best interests of their trade.

But the introduction of new processes would not necessarily prejudice the interests of the men. The machinery would want working under the best conditions, and though unskilled labour might suffice, it would certainly be found preferable to keep on, if possible, the men who

had done the same work before by hand. Individually, therefore, the men would have little to fear if they were only reasonable, while collectively they could look forward to a considerable increase in the amount of work to be done. Manufacturers who ought to know declare that there is no limit to the possible and the probable demand for Sheffield goods, if only they can be produced at a lower cost and in larger quantities. American and German goods may now hold the markets where a low price is the chief consideration; but in regard to quality there is a good-will in the name of "Sheffield" manufactures which still commands respect for them all the world over, and, provided that they can be sold at a price not so very much higher than the goods of our foreign competitors—even if not actually at the same price—and, also, that they can be produced promptly, according to the requirements of the market, there would even yet be time to endow those manufactures with fresh life and increased prosperity.

It would be an excellent thing if the trade unions concerned could be induced to look at the matter from this point of view. There is no lack among the trade unionists of Sheffield of shrewd, intelligent, and level-headed men who

must see how inimical the policy pursued in their name must be to the best interests of the industries on which they depend for their bread. But the tendency in Sheffield, as in other industrial centres, is for the meetings of the local labour unions, held in some public-house or other, to be attended mainly by the members who are often unemployed and in want of out-of-work benefit. These are the men who have most to gain from being friendly with the secretary, and the position of that official is thus rendered almost supreme. Individuals of the type referred to constitute the less intelligent of the workers, but it is they who chiefly dictate the policy of the unions, and especially that phase of it which limits the number of hands, so that masters may be compelled to take on even the ne'er-do-wells. One can, therefore, well understand the sentiments of a Sheffield employer who exclaimed, "If we are to have trade unions, then let the more intelligent men in the trade take a more active part in their management."

So it is hoped that the attempt to improve Sheffield industries by a resort to better methods of production will be accompanied by efforts to stimulate the zeal of the workmen, and to win them over to a keener sympathy and a greater community of interest with their employers.

If this could only be done there should be a better chance of promoting the interests of each by clearing away from the industries the restrictions by which they are now hampered. It may be suggested, too, that the employers should combine in some way so as to afford to the youths of the town an opportunity of becoming really qualified to enter the different industries. The literary education of the Board schools, and the theoretical teaching of evening classes, might be supplemented by a practical training given by the foremen and managers of the different employers, who should throw open the doors of their factories for the purpose, and pay such teachers out of a common fund for their services.

A scheme on some such basis as this would meet the breakdown of the apprenticeship system, and ensure an adequate supply of workers, without necessarily flooding the labour market. It would certainly be opposed by the trade union leaders, but that is hardly a sufficient reason for not making the attempt. There is in Sheffield, as elsewhere, an ample supply of "free" labour, mainly unskilled, from which lads to be trained for skilled and highly paid trades could easily be obtained if the door were only thrown open to them; and the question is, whether, by availing themselves of these opportunities, the

employers could not find means both to give greater vitality to their industries and to provide remunerative employment—in face of the improved markets which would then be so secured—to many a youth or man who would be glad enough to have it.

THE PRINTING TRADES

How the principle of restricting the output is affecting the printing trades, among others, is shown by the somewhat curious experience of the head of one of the largest printing firms in London. He finds that his foremen, though men of undoubted experience, are invariably wrong in their calculations as to the length of time that will be required to turn out a particular piece of work, and that it is always necessary to increase their estimate by from 5 to 15 per cent. The reason is that the foremen calculate according to the rate at which men in the trade would work when they themselves served in the rank and file. In the printing trade, also, as in certain others, those who do happen to work too hard may become marked men. There are always from 700 to 1,100 compositors out of work in London, and the worker on "'stab" wages who shows too much zeal in the interests of his employers is regarded by the more ignorant of the outsiders as one who keeps bread from

their mouths. Thus it has happened that such a person, reported on by an "apostle," has been hissed by the unemployed as he passed to and from his work, his duty, from their point of view, being not to over-exert himself, so that his employers will have to call in more hands.

It would not, however, be fair to suggest that the reduction of output in printing offices is entirely due to a deliberate adoption, from whatever motive, of "ca' canny" principles. In the Metropolis it is regarded by employers as due in no small degree to the distractions of London life. Men who devote all their leisure to sports, social clubs, amusements, musical societies, and so on, as many printers are found to do, cannot be expected to bring their full energy to bear on their work when they start in the morning, and it is feared that even when such men are at work they are thinking less of what is before them than of what they propose to do in the evening. London distractions are, indeed, regarded as one of the most active sources of injury to the London printing trade. Then, too, the decreased amount of work done per man, as compared with twenty years ago, has been accompanied in London by rises in the rates of pay to such an extent as seriously to interfere with certain branches of the trade, these increases

being mainly due to trade union action. The advance, granted in July, 1901, practically settled the fate of the book trade, so far as London printers were concerned. Much of this class of work has gone to Edinburgh or to the provinces, where rates are substantially lower, but much also has gone to Holland and Germany. Dutch printing firms, especially, have been keen on getting work from London. They have their own agents here, they now use English-made type, they engage English "readers," they employ compositors whose wages are only half what the London compositors receive, they make use of composing machines bought in this country, they deliver books or other printed matter in London at a reduction of 30 per cent. on London charges, and in this way are securing a good deal of the work that was formerly done in London. The flow of printing orders to either Holland or Germany is, in fact, steadily increasing, and with each further increase of wages here that flow is doubly accelerated—that is to say, not only because of the increased cost of production, but also because on each occasion people learn how much cheaper they can get their printing done abroad than at home.

In the opinion of one authority who has a very wide acquaintance with the printing trade in all

its branches, the tendency of the men engaged therein to "go easy" in regard to the use of improved machinery, by never working it to the top of its capacity, is so widespread as to be almost universal. He finds that the tendency shows itself more especially in regard to the fast two-revolution flat-bed presses recently introduced from the United States, and to the use made of composing machines.

The two-revolution presses referred to are employed for all kinds of jobs, and especially for the production of illustrated magazines and for half-tone and three-colour printing. They represent probably the highest class of mechanical engineering as applied to the printing trade, the absolute precision necessary for the three-colour printing requiring almost mathematical perfection in the fitting of the different parts, which have thus to be put together with the same degree of care as would be required in the making of a watch. Thus the machines cost considerably more than English Wharfedales, and the only justification for their purchase lies in their turning out a superior quality of work and in their assuring a greater speed in production. This greater speed should be obtained by the reduction to a *minimum* of the time occupied in getting the press ready to run off copies from any

given forme, and in the actual rate at which the copies are turned out. It is claimed that, in the case of the former, the reduction should be from four hours to two hours, and in the latter, an increase from 1,000 to 1,600, 1,800, or even 2,000 per hour. But the complaint is made that the employer is deprived of the economic advantages of the machines because the men working them, in the first place, spend as long a time as before in getting the presses ready, and, in the next place, refuse to feed them or run them otherwise than at a rate which shows but a slight advantage over machinery constructed according to the old designs, the actual output being, in fact, kept to between 1,000 and 1,500 copies per hour. A curious illustration of these restrictive methods of working is afforded by the fact that some of the fast American presses introduced into this country have actually been thrown out of order because of the unwillingness of the men to work them at the rate for which they are designed. There can, however, hardly be any patriotic prejudice against these "American" machines as such, because, though designed in the United States, they are now built in England, from English materials, by English workmen, and these English-made machines are declared to be better made and capable

of quicker running than those constructed in America. Obviously the real motive of the printers is to "leave work for some one else."

In the case of composing machines the hostility, direct or indirect, is still more severe. What an Englishman can do with a composing machine when he has a fair chance, and does not have the vision of a trade union official before his eyes, was shown at the recent Paris Exhibition, where the skill displayed by the English operators on one well-known class of machine excited the wonder even of American printers visiting the exhibition, some of them declaring that there was nothing equal to it in the United States, and offering the men permanent positions if they would go there. But the machine operator in an English office where "society" influences prevail is a very different person. Both in London and in the provinces the policy of the "society" is to restrict the output from the machine, in order that it may not compare too favourably with hand work, and that the employer may be compelled to engage more men. There was a competition not long ago carried on in London, Glasgow, and Manchester to show what results really could be produced from the machine, prizes being offered to the best workers. The London

Society of Compositors issued special notices to its members forbidding them to take part in the competition in London, and the other societies in the provinces advised their members not to enter. The competitions were thus left entirely in the hands of non-society men, who gave a good account of themselves, the best results being obtained by a newspaper hand who produced 34,432 ens corrected matter in two hours, or 17,216 per hour. The second on the list did 33,536 ens in the two hours. These figures show what can be done when men try; but, as a rule, every possible obstacle has been placed in the way of composing machines of all kinds since their introduction. Thus a skilled operator, working, under favourable conditions, one of the machines in respect to which the competition referred to above took place, should be able to produce 10,000 ens an hour without going at a competition pace. The output of the average operator, working under ordinary conditions, is from 5,000 to 7,000 per hour.

These figures will serve as an introduction to the story that in one office the firm, in the interests of their men, offered to give them higher rates of pay according to the work they turned out by the machines above 4,000 ens per hour. But "society" influence was brought

to bear on the firm, who had to withdraw their offer, to the detriment of the men. Any such stimulus to increased energy seems, indeed, to be effectually checked by the following rule of the Typographical Association:

> No member shall accept work on composing machines on terms under which he is called upon to produce a fixed amount of composition, or on a system of payment (except piecework purely and simple) which offers inducements to racing or undue competition between machine operators.

Then there was an attempt made to prevent the same firm from checking the amount of work done, so that the operators would not be detected if they decreased their output, and the work at once fell off by 1,000 ens per man per hour until the services of some of the operators were dispensed with, when the rate immediately rose higher than it had been before. In another house where similar tactics were resorted to the firm gave a fortnight's notice to the whole of their operators, reducing them to reason at once. Yet the men might evidently have pleaded, as an excuse, the following further rule of the Typographical Association:

> No machine operator working on 'stab shall mark his copy or be called upon to assist in any method which may be suggested for the purpose of testing the amount

of his composition. This clause not to interfere with the right of the employer to ascertain the output by legitimate means for charging or estimating purposes.

Another phase of the restrictive tactics in regard to machine composition has been the charging of "extras" on every possible occasion, so as, apparently, to send up the cost. Even a single accented letter is to count as a line. This action, however, has been directly to the prejudice of the society members, inasmuch as piecework is gradually being discarded in favour of 'stab, or fixed wages. Where men could legitimately earn from £3 to £4 per week, even without "extras," they now get £2 5*s*. per week.

It is true that in the first instance the introduction of labour-saving machinery into the printing trade caused a temporary displacement of labour, and it is an especially noteworthy fact that the normal number of compositors out of work in London would not be so great if the men had taken more kindly to composing machines, instead of showing a hostile attitude, and leaving so wide a door open for individuals of all classes, previously unfamiliar with printing, to acquire the art of working the machines and becoming operators. Hand compositors would certainly have made more desirable machine

operators than the men from outside; but as it is, they have only themselves to blame if others readily embrace opportunities which they themselves have neglected. While, too, the composing machines certainly displaced labour for a time, they have ended by greatly increasing the demand for labour. The appearance of eight-page halfpenny morning papers, which, in various ways, have given employment to so large a number of people, and, also, the increased size of certain penny morning newspapers, have been rendered practicable only through the decreased cost of production due to machine composition, so that, for the comparatively small number of men displaced at first, a large number have now been taken on, while it was always open to those who were displaced to acquire the new methods if they thought fit.

Some observations on the general position of the printing trades, made by the authority referred to above, will doubtless be read with interest:

> There can be no doubt that the most serious cause of new methods and new machinery not being rapidly adopted is to be found in the general absence of accurate technical knowledge, both of the machinery itself and in the management of the men, on the part of the responsible chiefs of the majority of big printing houses. These, as a rule, rely almost entirely upon their overseers for the

management of the men, and on their managers for the technical verdicts on any mechanical improvements. The chiefs of the houses confine themselves almost entirely to the general policy and management of their businesses, and yet it is upon an accurate knowledge of what machinery should do, and upon tact and skill in getting these results out of the men, that the commercial success of large printing-houses must, in the future, depend. Already an enormous amount of London printing has been taken away by Dutch and Belgian firms, who do their composition by machines, and work long hours and faster presses than are used in England, and at less wages. It would, nevertheless, not be difficult to prove that, if the master-printers to-day were to use nothing but the very best and fastest machinery, and were to insist upon the machinery being worked to its utmost capacity, they could compete economically with any foreign or "out-of-London" firm. It is exceedingly likely that, to do this, they would have to improve the position of their workmen by being willing to give better wages, but they could afford to do so, because the new machinery purchased would mean less labour than the old, and, producing more copies per hour, it would lower the wage cost per copy out of all proportion to the increased cost of the installation.

With special reference to the influences of trade unionism on the printing trade, two points should be borne in mind:

(1) It will hardly be believed by those outside the trade itself that the overseers, to whom practically the entire mechanical administration of these important businesses is entrusted, are men who have grown grey in the service of trade unionism. Should friction arise between the employers and the men, the man who should look after the employer's interests is one who is absolutely dependent for his future on remaining on the best of terms with

those with whom he is engaged in the struggle. Should his opposition to trade union contentions involve any infringement of any of the innumerable trade union regulations, the contributions of a lifetime to the union funds are sacrificed. It must seem hardly credible to those outside the trade that this should be the actual state of affairs, but it is as I have stated, and it is little wonder that employers get bad terms from unions when those in whose hands their interests lie practically in their entirety are men whose future condition in life depends upon their not exasperating those under them.

(2) While many printing offices have started as what are known in the trade as "open houses"—that is, those into which both unionists and non-unionists can be taken—yet, as a matter of experience, few of the houses thus nominally "open" are otherwise than entirely under the control of the various unions, and for this reason: In every such office the unionists form a strong and solid body, and the representatives of the union bring special pressure to bear upon all those outside the society to join, so that ultimately the unionist nucleus becomes strong enough to exclude non-society men. This exclusion is not brought about by the overseer or "clicker," though he is generally a unionist himself, but is effectually secured by unofficial representatives. The consequence is that, should friction arise between masters and men, and the men leave, they do so in a body, and, by picketing the house, they form a solid defence against any non-unionists being imported from a distance. The solution of these difficulties lies, and can only lie, either in overseers and managers being non-unionists, or in the managers and chiefs of the firm being themselves masters of every detail, while no printing house should allow itself to be labelled exclusively "society house," thereby losing all chance of saving its trade interests were a strike threatened.

The lithographic colour printing trade appears to be one of the few in the country which have come to recognise the dangerous tendencies of the "go easy" policy. Ten years ago the members of this trade in London were under the rule of the London Society of Lithographic Printers, and, whether tacitly sanctioned by this society or not, the policy of restricting the output prevailed to such an extent that in some shops it was impossible to get a man to turn out more than four or five reams a day. There was no stated rule that no more should be done, but there was an unwritten law, and the man who did more had a very rough time of it among his shopmates, and soon found it expedient to do as they were doing. The natural result was that the cost of production grew excessive, and a good deal of the trade went either to the country, where it cost $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. less, or to Germany (the "home" of colour printing), where it was done for 20 per cent. less than in London. Then another society, the "Amalgamated," consisting mostly of younger men with broader ideas, was introduced into London from the provinces and gained considerable support, one excellent thing in its favour being that it would not tolerate the former restrictive practices. This wiser policy, coupled with the fact that

the men became alive to the mischief which had already been done, has led to a greater disposition on their part to do their best. The average being taken of London houses all round, it is calculated that the men now turn out 17½ per cent. more than was the case ten years ago. The effect of this improvement has been to check somewhat the sending of work to Germany, and it is even hoped that some of the trade already lost will eventually be regained.

THE FURNITURE TRADES

THE very considerable expansions which have been brought about in the English furniture trades during the past few years may be specially commended to the consideration of those workmen who are disposed to regard labour-saving machinery as necessarily inimical to their own interests.

Not more than fifteen years ago London was the "seat" of the English furniture trade, and a very large proportion of this furniture was then made by people known as "garret masters," who carried on the work in their own dwellings in the slums of Finsbury, Shoreditch, Bethnal Green, or elsewhere. Aided by their wives and by those of their sons who were capable of handling a tool, these garret masters would toil hard during the week, working in the most unhealthy conditions, and on the Saturday they would put on a barrow or a handcart the furniture they had made and take it to the wholesale dealers, to whom they would dispose

of it for the best terms they could get. In the Curtain Road, in those days, it was possible on a Saturday afternoon to see a hundred or so of these garret masters, with their barrows, all eagerly looking forward to receiving the money which would represent not only the funds to replenish the domestic exchequer, but the fresh capital with which the raw materials for the next week's operations could be purchased. Then came the advent of the machinery era, which has led to the practical extinction of the garret master, and to the reorganisation of the industry on its present expanded basis.

In the first instance, most of the machinery used here for cabinet-making came from the United States; though of late years the British engineers have taken up the matter with an enterprise and an inventive skill that have enabled them to turn out machines equal to the best of those from America or Germany. But, whatever may be the particular country in which the machines are constructed, the broad fact remains that two-thirds of the furniture now made in Great Britain is made by machinery. Not only do the machines produce sections or parts of furniture by the hundred or the thousand in a marvellously short space of time; there is the further consideration that the machines do

work of a kind that seems almost incredible. There is, for instance, an automatic carving machine which is a perfect marvel of ingenuity. A workman puts a piece of timber into the machine, which he locks up, sets going, and then leaves to itself. Half an hour later he returns, finds that the machine has stopped of its own accord, reopens it, and takes out the piece of timber, converted into an elaborately carved panel. This, when it has been finished off, could not be distinguished from a similar panel which an ordinary woodcarver might take a week to produce by hand. There is another machine which, worked by a boy, will carve four panels at a time, the cutting tools being guided by a metal pattern, and each acting simultaneously on a piece of timber placed on a separate shelf in the machine. Thanks to such devices as these, cheap bedroom suites, for instance, can now be provided with an amount of ornamentation which would otherwise be impossible at the price. In the same way the effect of the use of machinery has been both to cheapen greatly the cost of production and greatly to increase the demand for furniture at the substantially lower prices for which it can now be obtained.

So it is that the small makers, turning out

a few articles per week in their own homes, with the help of their wives and children, have given place to large factories, where goods are produced in great quantities by means of every mechanical device that human ingenuity has yet invented for the making of furniture. London, too, can no longer be regarded as the seat of the industry, for the great factories which have sprung up in Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham, and elsewhere have rendered each of these towns a furniture-making centre for its immediate district. Then, too—and this is the point on which special stress may be laid—instead of the demand for labour having suffered as the result of this extensive resort to labour-saving machines, the expansion of the industry is such that the workers are now 25 per cent. more in number than they were before the machinery era set in. It is true that this era has led to the introduction of a considerable element of foreign workers; but, in the opinion of one very competent authority on the subject, there was plenty of work for the British and the foreigners alike until the war in South Africa closed, for a time, one of the very best markets of the English furniture exporter—that of the Cape. As for the garret masters, most of them have taken employment in the

large factories, where they can earn a regular wage; and they have been able to leave the slums of London for such suburban districts as Walthamstow, coming to their work by train, and returning in the evening to their homes, which are now no longer merely workshops in disguise.

THE GOLD-BEATING INDUSTRY AND GERMAN COMPETITION

THE incursions which German competition has made into the British gold-beating industry have played serious havoc with one of the oldest and most interesting of our handicrafts. The demand for those wonderful "leaves" of beaten gold, which are so thin that from 280,000 to 300,000 of them would be required to make the thickness of one inch, has greatly increased of late years in respect to their use for decorative gilding, picture frames, signs, facias, the ornamentation of furniture, the lettering on books, and so on; yet not only has the greater part of the increased trade fallen into the hands of the Germans, but they have managed to capture also the greater part of the trade formerly done by the English makers.

In this instance, however, there is no question of trade union restriction or interference. The fault, if any, must be laid at the door of the British public rather than at that of the

operatives. It is true that the men, following the example of those engaged in so many other trades, do not work so hard as they or their predecessors used to do. It is said of them by those of long experience in the gold-beating trade that the spread in the workshops of what may be called the conversation habit has led to a decreased speed in working, as compared with that which was in vogue thirty years ago, so that a man who still works with old-fashioned energy is rare. The output of the average individual worker to-day is said to be about 25 per cent. less than it was three decades ago; but as the men work piece the loss is on their side and not on that of the employer. The decreased energy is the more striking because there has been a falling-off in the rate of wages, and one might suppose that the men would be likely to work even harder in order to make up the difference. Still, in the gold-beating trade there is no suggestion whatever that the lessened prosperity is due to the work-people. For the chief causes of the decline one must look rather to the conditions under which the trade is carried on in Germany.

Most of the competition experienced by the English producers of gold-leaf comes from a type of German maker not to be found in this

country. In the districts where the handicraft is chiefly carried on in Germany men who are themselves little superior to the ordinary workmen are financed by so-called "bankers" (belonging to the class known here as money-lenders), and start in the gold-beating industry on their own account. Such individuals will take into their service from twenty to thirty persons, and carry on what an Englishman would consider a fairly extensive business; but they will be content with a financial return that no employer of labour in this country would regard as adequate. Thus it may happen that a manufacturer of this class, employing thirty hands, will consider himself passing rich on an income of £3 a week, and will be quite content to live in a house only a little better than that of an ordinary skilled workman. There are, it is true, other manufacturers in Germany with much larger concerns, and making much larger profits; but it is these smaller masters who supply most of the gold-leaf that competes with the English-made article.

Then there is the fact that the German makers use much more alloy with their gold than is the case with makers here, while they also adopt methods which (combined with the greater comparative speed at which their work-

people labour) enable them to produce more leaf in a given time, and at a less cost, though at the sacrifice of quality. Thus the German maker will offer for 35*s.* what the English maker wants 45*s.* for; but the difference in quality is such that the German gold-leaf, though suitable enough for the lettering on books and other such purposes, is declared to be quite unsuitable for use in large surfaces, or where it will be exposed to the weather. In these latter conditions the cheaper German article will want renewing in a year or so, whereas it is claimed for the English article that it will keep good for many years.

It is this difference in quality that has enabled the English manufacturers to make any stand at all against the German competition, and save the English trade from being swept away altogether. The English makers feel, however, that their fellow-countrymen do not appreciate the fact that in paying, say, £1 extra for English gold-leaf on a £20 signboard, they will not only help to maintain a British industry now steadily declining, but will gain a substantial advantage for themselves, because they will not require to have their signboards regilded (and consequently repainted as well) at the end of a year or so, as may happen when the cheaper but

less durable German gold-leaf is employed. To the tradesman who supplies the signboard it may be a distinct advantage to use the foreign metal, not only because it costs him less to begin with, but also because he will be all the sooner called in to go over the work again. The remedy, therefore, lies in the hands of the British public.

SOME MISCELLANEOUS EXAMPLES

In order to bring present-day industrial conditions still more forcibly before the mind of the reader, I will give here a batch of illustrations which may be left to speak for themselves:—

A leading iron and steel company, impressed by what their competitors across the Atlantic were doing, put down an American electrical machine for the charging of open-hearth furnaces. In America one man will attend to two or three of these machines; but at the works referred to the Steel Melters' Union insisted that three men should be employed at each furnace, just as when the work was done by hand; and, though the union agreed to a certain rearrangement of the wages of these three men, it demanded such an increase in the wages of the workers in other branches of the steel-melting industry that the enterprise of the company was completely nullified, and they got practically no advantage whatever from the new method. Instead of being discouraged, however, the company have entered

on a bold policy of self-defence. Spurred on by what they regard as the unreasonable attitude of the men's union, they are now investigating the merits of every labour-saving machine which has yet been adopted in America or projected in Great Britain; and, though hitherto they have followed the principle of never displacing labour by machinery without having the strongest reason for so doing, they are looking forward to the time when certain mechanical arrangements, chiefly electrical, will enable them to dispense with 30 per cent. of the men whose union has been such a stumbling-block to the proper development of the works. The aspiration of the enterprising manager—told half in jest and half in earnest—is to have in the centre of the huge establishment a sort of conning-tower, where a man who can see all that goes on will pull levers or press buttons setting all sorts of things in motion, or carrying through all kinds of processes, with little or no need for human agency. Machines, the manager finds, are much more reasonable than men, and he rejoices in the fact that electricity has no trade union prejudices. Not but what he is sorry for the men who may be displaced. He says:

Individually they are splendid fellows, as strong in physique and as steady and sober in their habits as you

could wish them to be. But collectively they have no moral courage. They are favourable to our own views, but they dare not refuse to obey the union officials, who collect their subscriptions and tell them what to do, and they will not sever themselves from their society from fear of being called "blacklegs."

A company engaged in the manufacture of iron pipes had an old shop stocked with machinery worth not more than about £2,000. They swept it away, and in its place constructed a new shop, in which the very best appliances worked by electricity, air, or water were introduced—including electric and hydraulic cranes, pneumatic hoists, and so on—the total cost of the new arrangements being about £30,000. But at first the aspirations of the company that they would secure a better output were completely stultified by the action of their men, who refused to produce more pipes with the new methods than they had with the old. Eventually they were induced to be more reasonable, but even now the company are not getting from the improved processes anything like the results they ought to secure; while the cost of production is still so high that iron pipes from France are delivered at Birkenhead at a lower rate than that at which the works in question can make them.

Some electric cranes of the latest pattern were

put in a forge, but on the first day the forgemen declared that they were not going to work "them there things," and they went off, leaving all the furnaces and other work standing. They stayed away a few days, and then returned, but it was some time before they were thoroughly reconciled to the innovation.

In the Lean Valley, Notts, the membership of the Miners' Association is still kept up by such practices as those suggested by the following handbill—practices which enable the armchair statisticians of the Board of Trade Labour Department to record in their official reports the "growth" of trade unionism in this country:

NOTTS MINERS' ASSOCIATION.

New medals will, by resolution of the council, be given out on December 23, 1897, but members are requested not to wear them till Monday, January 3, 1898.

No medal will be given to any person who owes any arrears whatever. We trust all members will see they are clear then, and receive their medals.

We also urge them to bring all their pressure to bear on those who are not at present members, with a view of inducing, or, if necessary, compelling, them to join the association, and if they do not join and get a medal by Monday, January 3, 1898, we trust members will enforce a former resolution of council, and compel them to ride, walk, and work by themselves in future.

JNO. GEO. HANCOCK.
AARON STEWART.

Probably none but those who are in close touch with the industries concerned have realised how many different classes of men may be included in the operations of individual firms or companies. Thus it is possible that a shipbuilding establishment may include platers, riveters, caulkers and cutters, angle-smiths, holders-up, strappers and packers, blacksmiths, fitters, brass-finishers, patternmakers, coppersmiths, shipwrights, joiners, cabinetmakers, plumbers, painters, masons, bricklayers, sawyers, polishers, boat-builders, sailmakers, riggers, sparmakers, tinsmiths, sawmill men, redleaders, cementers, felters, enginemen, cranemen, firemen, iron sorters, smiths' finishers, machinemen, drillers, holecutters and borers, furnacemen, platers' helpers, angle-smiths' strikers, blacksmiths' strikers, fitters' labourers, patternmakers' labourers, shipwrights' labourers, joiners' labourers, plumbers' labourers, painters' labourers, masons' labourers, sawyers' labourers, and general labourers—a total of 49 classes in all. The unions with which a single large shipbuilding and engineering establishment may have to deal comprise the following: Associated Society of Shipwrights, United Machine Workers' Association, Amalgamated Society of Engineers, Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners,

Associated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, Millmen and Machinemen's Association, Amalgamated Union of Cabinet Makers, United Pattern Makers' Association, National Amalgamated Society of Operative House and Ship Painters and Decorators, United Operative Plumbers' Association, Co-operative Smiths' Society, Associated Smiths' Society, United Hammer Men and Forge Furnace Society, Northern United Enginemen's Association, Steam Engine Makers' Society, National United Engineers' Society, North of England Brass Finishers', Fitters', and Turners' Society, Tyneside and National Labour Union, Brass Moulders' Trade and Benefit Society, Friendly Society of Ironfounders, Boiler Makers' Society, Gasworkers' and General Labourers' and Operative Bricklayers' Society—a total of 23, without counting possible subdivisions into sundry minor unions for individual sets of men.

To the average outsider the possibilities of disputes arising between the employers and one or other of these different unions would seem to be great enough ; but, on the principle of family quarrels being the worst, the most serious troubles generally arise from disputes between the unions themselves respecting such questions as the demarcation of work. In a

certain shipbuilding yard, for instance, a number of drillers were put on to make holes in some plates one-tenth of an inch in thickness. Thereupon the chippers claimed the work, on the ground that they had always done it on plates that were thicker, and therefore they should be allowed to do it on these. The firm replied that they did not care which set of men did it, so long as the work was done. Neither side would give way, and both drillers and chippers went out on strike, work on the ship being suspended. At last the shipbuilders called in some boys to do the work, and the strikers returned when the work was finished, having been out for thirteen weeks. Then, as further illustrating the jealousy with which the "rights" of particular classes are regarded, reference may be made to a battleship that was being launched before her barbettes had been put in. The shipbuilders got the shipwrights to fix some pieces of wood to indicate where the barbettes would eventually be placed, and thereupon the joiners left the vessel in a body because the work had not been given to them. Many people, too, will recall the strike of fitters and plumbers which occurred in the North in 1891, all large firms in the district being penalised for the four months of the strike, simply because

two bodies of men could not agree as to who should screw certain pipes. That troubles of this kind are not still more frequent is due more to the tact of the masters than to that of the men. There was one occasion, at least, when an employer who could not induce his men to settle amicably a dispute as to which should do a particular piece of work, took off his coat and did the job himself. There comes a gentle reminder, too, that the "Ca' canny" policy is not confined to the building trade. For instance, carpenters caulking decks are not allowed to do more than 120 ft. per day, although they could quite well do 200 ft.

Then there is a general restriction as to the number of apprentices. Men who have been for years in the employ of a shipbuilding firm cannot, owing to the rules of their unions, bring their sons up to their own trades, and the consequence is that in busy times the number of workmen is insufficient. To restrict output, one man may only attend to one machine, although he could sometimes attend to three.

There are, also, limitations as to overtime, so that a man may not work as long as he likes, or earn as much as he wishes; while the black squad—platers, riveters, angle-smiths—compel the foremen of their trades to be members of

their unions. And yet, in spite of all these sources of possible troubles, a high official in a large works where most of the conditions referred to may be found is able to write:

> There is no wish on the part of masters in this district to interfere with trade unionism as a principle, but rather to encourage it to proceed upon more reasonable lines than it has of late years shown a tendency to follow.

AN IRONMASTER'S EXPERIENCES

ASKED to tell the story of his own experiences, an ironmaster who is connected with a number of important industrial concerns replied:

What I find in regard to the men who have come under my notice is that they have ceased to take any pride in their work, and their only concern is how they can get through it with the least trouble to themselves. The main reason, perhaps, is to be found in the distractions to which they give themselves up. There are districts where the people seem to care for nothing but betting, football, and drinking. If the Chancellor of the Exchequer would only compel all bookmakers to take out a licence and pay a heavy sum for it, he would confer a great blessing on this country. It is not only the ordinary race meetings that engage the attention of the men. There are little local races, called "flapping" meetings, which take them off for the Monday and Tuesday, and generally end by keeping them away for the greater part of the week. Then there will be from 20,000 to 30,000 people at a football match, and betting will go on at every match. As for the drinking habit, you may judge of that by this little fact. At a certain shipyard 200 men are engaged, and the whistle goes for the starting of work at 6 o'clock in the morning, the men being allowed three minutes' grace. Just outside

the shipyard gate there is a publichouse, which must not open until 6, and the question is how 200 men can be supplied with a drink of whisky in that short space of three minutes without their being late for work. It is done in this way: The landlord has 200 quarterns of whisky arranged along the counter in readiness. Instantly on the stroke of 6 he throws open the doors, and the men rush in. Each picks up a quartern, tosses it down his throat, and then rushes out again at the opposite door, having first called out his name, which is hurriedly written down, payment for the liquor being made when there is more leisure. In this way the whole 200 will get their morning "nip" within the three minutes.

But betting, football, and drinking are not all. One of the most degrading things is the penny theatre. Not only are the performances themselves open to objection, but the men are kept there till late at night, with the result that they are late in coming to work in the morning. A Bank holiday means that the men are away for three or four days, while every village or hamlet has its "feast," or "wake," a reminiscence of the old hiring days, and it is a matter of custom that each man shall attend the feast in the particular place he comes from, which means that he is generally away for a week. Within a radius of five miles of one particular works there are ten places where such feasts are held between the middle of June and the end of August, and as the absence of a single man may mean the stoppage of a whole department, it follows that between the dates mentioned there is nothing but broken work. Every holiday means, too, that instead of starting next day at 6 the work will begin only at 8.30, and then with only 40 men out of, say, 500 or 600, though full steam will be up, the engines running, and the dynamos in operation. What a loss all this is to a firm or company, and how it

tends to send up the cost of production, you can readily imagine.

Then, again, owing to the action of the trade unions in endeavouring unduly to raise wages, furnaces have to be kept, or put, out of blast, which otherwise it would have paid to work. It sometimes happens that it will be better for the ironmaster to stop a furnace altogether rather than yield to a demand for increased pay, of which the state of trade will not allow, so that the only result of such a demand is to throw men out of work. There are firms which dare not accept a really big order, because their doing so would involve the construction or the starting of another furnace or another shop, and the trade union leaders would instantly demand an increase of wages for all branches of the trade, or the concession of an eight-hours day. Thus, however much a firm might desire to increase the manufacturing capacity of their works, they must consider very seriously before doing so. As for new methods, the only way to get the men to use American appliances is to throw the old machines on the scrap heap, and then there will be only the improved processes available.

Then, as regards the colliery districts, when trade is good we get less coal than we do when trade is bad. Good trade means that wages will go up, but the men will be content with earning the same amount as before and do less work, thus producing a smaller quantity of coal just when more is wanted. So we get the axiom that "the higher the wages the smaller the supplies." In the same way, when trade is bad and wages fall the men will work harder and increase their output in order to keep their wages up to the same point.

Alike in ironworks and collieries the boys are a source of great trouble. They meet together, suddenly resolve to have a day's holiday, go off, and the whole work must

stop in consequence. At a colliery in the Nottingham district twenty boys who had so acted were prosecuted, and ten of them were sent to prison for fourteen days in default of paying a fine. Thereupon the whole of the pitmen went on strike, and declared that they would not go back to work until the boys had come out of prison. The whole question of getting good, trustworthy boys is, indeed, one of the most troublesome of problems for employers of labour at the present day. The practical results of the education movement, so far as this question is concerned, are in no way commensurate with the expenditure it has entailed. Some of the fault, however, must be attributed to the parents, for instances have occurred where men who are making their £3 or £4 a week in an ironworks, or even more, will, instead of bringing up their sons to the same trade, seek for them a situation as clerk in the office, where, though they will not rise above 30*s.* a week, they will have a more "respectable" occupation. Some experiences of this kind have led one ironmaster at least to the conviction that the most desirable boys for an ironworks are orphans.

AMERICAN METHODS

THE following interesting account of the methods of work pursued in the United States, contributed by a gentleman connected with the management of a large engineering firm in the North of England, may serve still further to enlighten employers and employed in this country as to the real nature of the competition they must be prepared to face:

Like many other employers, I recently, while in America, tried to get at the bottom of the astonishing manufacturing superiority of that country. The explanation is a simpler matter than one would have thought, and lies chiefly in, first, the really amazing completeness of the technical knowledge and devotion to their work of American employers, and next, in the really terrific energy that the American workman throws into his work.

The contrast between the American workman and the English workman is a useful one to contemplate, and instructive because it is not explained by a double dose of original sin in the Englishman. The truth is, the best workmen in America are not Americans at all, but Englishmen, Germans, and other, the *élite* of European working classes, who have left Europe because the scope

for their energies is so terribly restricted. Undoubtedly English trade unionism, in putting a check upon individual energy, has done much towards driving the better workmen of England out of the country, and, amongst the various causes of our industrial decadence, this gradual sapping away of our best men must be recognised as one of the chief, and the most serious of its consequences.

The question one naturally asked oneself was—How is it that in Pittsburg you find Lancashire and Sheffield men doing two and three times the work per day that they do in their native country? You have not got to the bottom of the thing by putting the whole blame on the obstructiveness of trade unionism, because, when all is said and done, trade unionism, *per se*, is not one whit more favourable in America to rapid and large production than it is here. It seems to me that the explanation is to be found in the splendid handling of their men which American employers show. They have had to face exactly the same problems of restricted output that our employers had to face. American strikes have been as extensive, as serious, and as damaging as our own. But two things show very clearly. First, American employers have displayed a far higher degree of capacity for mutual assistance and organisation, and next, a greater willingness to encourage their men to share in the benefits and profits of improved methods and machinery. The mutual power of combination has rendered their front a more formidable one to the purely obstructive tactics of union warfare, while their ingenuity in devising methods by which, while keeping within the union rules, they encourage their men to increased production, is gradually robbing trade unionism of much of its "anti-employer" spirit, for the simple reason that the employers are making themselves the protagonists of a system which leads to almost

indefinite possibilities for increase of wages, the increase, however, depending entirely upon the skill and energy of the men employed.

Piecework is being gradually abandoned in favour of various forms of the premium system. Under this system men, according to their rating, are employed at a weekly wage which figures out at so much per hour. The amount of work required as a *minimum* from each man for this wage is definitely fixed, and no one remains at that wage who fails to reach this *minimum*. In this way a far higher standard, both of wage and of skill, is reached. No one is employed at all who falls below it, and thus one of the main contentions of trade unionism—*i.e.*, a *minimum* wage, is secured for the men. The point of the premium system lies in the combination with this of an undertaking on the part of the employer to let each man who does more than his allotted task in the time receive, as in one system, a percentage of extra wage for every increase in work; or, as in another, half the time saved. Thus we will suppose a turner, engaged at 1*s.* per hour, has to produce 20 articles per hour from his lathe as a *minimum*. If he produces less than 20 he ceases to be employed, that being the *minimum* standard for the rate at which he is engaged. Should he produce 40 in the hour he will be paid either 50 per cent. on his wages (or 1*s.* 6*d.* for that hour) or half the time saved, which, in the case of double production, is the same. The difference of the two systems would come out when a man produced, say, four times his allotted task. Suppose he produced 80 in the hour, instead of 20, half the time saved on the extra work (or 60 articles) would make double wages and one half (or 2*s.* 6*d.*) in the latter system; whereas, by the former system, a man can never earn more than twice the agreed wage. In practice there is little to choose between the two, as it seldom happens that the price of a job is such that it is possible

to do much more than double, or one-and-a-half times, the task over the agreed one.

While in Pittsburg I went closely into the working of this system in one of the largest and most important electrical engineering establishments in the world. In the actual week's wages sheets which I inspected there were over 1000 men who had earned premiums. The premiums varied from 25 per cent. to about 100 per cent. over the wages, and an examination of almost the whole of the premium tickets revealed the fact that the vast majority of those who had earned high premiums were English workmen from the Manchester and Sheffield districts.

A system such as this, which gives such a splendid scope to individual energy, while at the same time serving the masters' interests by a notable lowering of the costs of production, is one which has commended itself very strongly in America; and the almost universality of its adoption has rendered any effective protest on the part of trade unionism impossible, even had the unionists been anxious to protest very vigorously. To work this system satisfactorily the rate of pay and the standard of work per hour must be agreed upon for some considerable period of years, in order that an opportunity may be given to the men for getting the full benefit of their increased skill. As a rule the period is fixed for two or more years, and has not to be varied by the masters except on the introduction of new machinery to do the work. On the introduction of such new machinery a new rate is agreed, and always without friction, the men knowing perfectly well that, whatever the agreed rate, they will soon get skilful enough in the use of the machinery to go beyond the allotted margin.

Of course it must not be forgotten that in America the surplus supplies of labour are not so great as here, and

consequently the men have fewer inducements to insist upon unnecessary hands being employed or jobs being slowed down for fear of throwing comrades out of work. And in this, perhaps, may be found the explanation of the American employer's freedom to put an indefinite number of automatic machines under the supervision of a single man. In one shop, not far from New York, I saw fifteen automatic screw-making machines in charge of a tool-maker and a boy. Surface grinders, in the same way, are often put in gangs of ten, and I have heard of as many as fifteen being run by a single machine-minder.

As far as the labour aspect of industrialism is concerned, the superiority of America, I think, lies probably in the three things I have mentioned,—*viz.*, (1) the technical knowledge and organising power of the employers; (2) the system by which men and masters share in cheapened processes, and increased skill on the part of the workmen; and (3) the freedom of the masters to employ automatic machinery without superfluous supervising men.

To return to an English shop after seeing shops such as these, and to see a group of forty surface grinders in the charge of twenty men, all standing idly watching the machines work, having literally nothing to do for 90 per cent. of their time, is a spectacle that sickens and angers one; and it is a wonder how Englishmen can find it consistent with their dignity as men to insist on drawing pay for work, when practically the whole time they are mere spectators.

As far as the individual merits of American and English workmen are concerned, I was not able to discover any greater standard of skill in America than in England. As I have said, a very large proportion of the best workmen are English and Germans; but undoubtedly the individual efficiency is higher on account of the personal anxiety of each man to do the best for

himself. There is a superiority, but it is one that lies more in the general moral than in any greater technical skill or mechanical knowledge.

The degree to which labour-saving appliances are developed on the grand scale is, of course, extraordinary. It is little wonder that the Steel Trust makes such profits, when one reflects, as recently pointed out by Mr. J. Lawrence, M.P., at Newport, that manufacturers are paying to-day in Pittsburg individual wages twice as high as are paid in this country to their men, and in spite of this the steel costs them per ton half the sum in wages it costs in England. The great sheet steel rolling shed of the Homestead Works offers a sight almost uncanny in its way. Two men working a Westinghouse electric apparatus will draw out white-hot ingots from the furnace and deposit them in the jaws of the rollers, two others manipulate the rollers, reducing the ingot by successive squeezings to a sheet many hundreds of feet in length; a couple of men at either side of the rollers sprinkle some kind of composition on to the gradually cooling steel; and a seventh manipulates the machinery that transfers the long steel sheet from the carrying mechanism behind the rollers to the cooling ground at the side. Speaking from memory, I cannot be sure as to the exact number of men employed. My recollection is that it was not above seven. It may possibly have been nine. In any case, the proportion of men to the amount and importance of the work done was extraordinarily small. It was the same in every shed one went to—vast buildings with furnaces down the middle, or rolling mills, with hardly a man to be seen, although all in full work.

Parallel to this willingness on the part of the American employer to spend almost any money in improved plant, machinery, and buildings, if any saving in production is assured by it, there is in almost every important American

shop an exceedingly complete and expensive system of keeping the most minute check on the cost of almost every single thing done. The expense of such a department is considerable, as it involves an inspector or clerk in every department, and a staff for the general totalling and analysing of the returns, say a clerk to every fifty men employed in the factory. Thus, on a wages sheet of £150,000 a year, the costing department may run to £40 per week. It is found, however, that the money is well invested. It gives the most efficient check upon the cost of production, defective work is immediately discovered, the cause of the defect is accounted for, and every one concerned, from the chief manager to the foremen's assistants, is put on his mettle to make every week's or month's showing an improvement on its predecessor.

Besides this, the relations between innumerable great tool-making firms and engineering firms are close and intimate, so that improvements in tools, all with a view to reducing cost and improving production, is a process that is daily going forward, while in every big engineering shop a large proportion of the tools in use are specially designed for the standard jobs they are engaged on. The ingenuity and complexity of some of these is really bewildering. One machine I saw at work on small cast-iron boxes performed twenty-nine drilling operations, mostly of different gauges, in three operations, the whole not occupying more than a minute and a half each. One man working on this machine for six weeks was able to drill a sufficient number of boxes to keep the whole of the rest of the factory occupied with work the rest of the year. In this particular instance the amount saved over the ordinary drilling operation of drilling each hole separately would be something like 3,000 per cent.

WHITHER "GO EASY" IS LEADING

THE collection of concrete facts here presented respecting our industrial conditions may be fittingly set against the abstract theories with which many people are apt to content themselves in the discussion of labour problems. The investigation made into these actual conditions shows that, even apart from militant trade unionism and the serious inroads of foreign competition, a state of crisis has indeed been brought about in the world of labour, and that, except in those instances where a determined stand has been made by the employers, injury is being done to our industries through the adoption of ideas started by Socialist schemers, and accepted by workers who either find those theories agree with their natural inclinations, or else think they are showing consideration for the unemployed by leaving a share of their own work for them. How the mischief is spreading is shown by a remark made to a certain employer

by one of his steadiest and most active workers, who declared to him, "I feel like a culprit in doing my best, and that I am doing what I have no business to do, because I may be keeping another man out of a job." So it is that one of the things most urgently required is that those who can influence the opinion of the working classes of this country should seek to convince them of the fallacy of such reasoning, showing them that, though a general policy of "go easy" may lead, at first, to more workers being put on, it must inevitably increase the cost of production, send up prices, diminish demand, and drive trade more and more to countries where the goods can be turned out more cheaply. They should be shown, too, that the best way of ensuring employment for those for whom there is now no work is so to improve the conditions of trade that there will be a greater demand for our manufactures, with a consequent greater and more general demand for labour. Working men should be persuaded, too, that if they adopt "ca' canny" principles, not merely as a "simple and handy" substitute for strikes, but as a general policy for their everyday labour, they will merely play into the hands of Socialist leaders who are as irresponsible as they are regardless of the evils

of industrial disturbance, and are animated by an aspiration to capture British industries in the hope of being helped thereby to secure the further items on their dubious programme. If the working men of the country have any regard for the welfare of the country, and especially for the prosperity of the trades on which they are dependent for their living, let them look into these things while there is time.

A BRITISH SEAPORT UNDER TRADE UNION RULE

THE condition into which our industries would be in danger of falling if the extreme Labour and Socialist party were to gain the upper hand can best be realised by recalling the state of things that existed in the Hull docks in the days when the Dockers' Union was an active force there. At that time the affairs of the union were administered in the local ports by local officials who were mostly illiterate men, ruling with a rod of iron against which the workers over whom they tyrannised found it useless to complain, while even among the workers themselves each man was a spy on his fellows. No one was allowed to work who could not produce a union card, and also show that he had paid all claims on him up to date. One of the union officials was generally at work on each ship, and this official claimed the right of calling for a production of cards whenever he felt inclined. If he found that any man had no

card, or had not paid up his last subscription, he would order the foreman to discharge the man at once. This the foreman would be obliged to do, and the man would not be allowed to go on to another ship until he had made himself right with the union. Innumerable instances of this kind occurred, even men who had been unable to pay up all their subscriptions on account of ill-health being turned adrift. If the foreman refused to discharge the man, word would be sent to one of the leading officials, who would at once come on the scene and threaten to call off every man from the vessel unless the order given were instantly obeyed. The foreman would then be forced to yield, and, later on, being himself a member of the union, he would be compelled to appear before a committee and explain his conduct, probably having to pay a fine as well for not having at once obeyed the order of a union official.

Then the employers were subjected to constant annoyance by deputations waiting on them at all hours of the day over small matters of detail, the members of the deputations assuming so insolent and overbearing a tone that they would go to the offices of a local firm, ask for the partners by their Christian names, and say, "Just tell them that so-and-so has happened,

which is contrary to our rule, and unless they rectify it at once we shall call out our men."

This sort of thing was tolerated for some time; but matters were brought to a climax when the union demanded of one of the firms that it should pay up the arrears of subscription of two union men in its employ, and should compel two other of its *employés*, who were not union men, to join. Concluding that it was time for them to become masters of their own business, the shipowners decided to place their foremen and shipping clerks on the permanent staff, and require them to leave the Dockers' Union. Dockers, lightermen, coopers, sailors and firemen, grain porters, and warehousemen were brought out on strike against this action on the part of the employers; but all to no purpose. After lasting six weeks the strike ended in favour of the shipowners, and the power of the Dockers' Union was effectually broken.

AGGRESSIVE TRADE UNIONISM OUT OF DATE

THIS is an ugly, though absolutely true, picture of the state of things that has prevailed in an English shipping port under the sway of trade unionism of an exceptionally aggressive type, not likely, one may hope, to be revived. But even taking the average run of trade unions, there is, as a rule (to which, however, there are many praiseworthy exceptions), such a lack of elasticity about them, such an inability to make allowance for modern conditions of production and competition, such an unwillingness to see benefit conferred on the working man which might prejudice their own control over him, that they are rapidly becoming out of date.

The majority of employers will confess that a really well-conducted trade union, worked along temperate and reasonable lines, would be an excellent thing in many branches of our national industry, especially in facilitating arrangements to apply to the whole of any particular trade.

It must also be confessed that in years gone by the pressure of a trade union may have been necessary to secure fair treatment for workmen. But the average employer of to-day recognises that under existing economic conditions it would be suicidal on his part to resort to lines of policy that might have been followed with impunity a few decades ago. As it is, the intervention of a trade union is not necessarily required to secure improved conditions for the workers.

A further illustration of this fact—and one which deals, too, with the point already mentioned as to trade union officials thinking more of their own position than of the real welfare of their members—comes from Hull. In May, 1900, an advance of wages was given, on their own application, to the men employed in dock labour there. The officials of the Dockers' Union (whose earlier defeat by the shipowners has been already described) were greatly annoyed on finding that the advance had been granted without their intervention, and they thought to revenge themselves on the employers by causing trouble in the port. A number of weekly trading vessels leave Hull on Saturday nights for the Continent, and work on them has often to be done on those days up to the hour of starting. Out of sheer spite for having been

overlooked in the negotiations on the wages question, the union officials held meetings and did their utmost to convince the men that they ought to have a Saturday half-holiday. As it happened, however, most of the men already had too many half-holidays during the week, and depended on the Saturday work to tide them over Sunday. They failed to see the force of the union leaders' arguments, and, though a strike was proclaimed, not 5 per cent. of the men joined in it.

EMPLOYERS' BENEFIT FUNDS

FURTHER evidence of this supreme regard on the part of the trade union officials for the maintenance of their own authority is afforded by the marked and persistent opposition they have shown to the benefit funds and other beneficent projects carried out by employers.

The trade union officials are especially afraid that the funds established by some of the largest employers of labour will offer greater attractions to a large body of trade union members than their own unions can do; and the fear is well founded. It is well known that a good proportion of men of the provident type join the unions mainly for the purpose of making provision against sickness, old age, and death; but, apart from the actuarial weakness of the funds, and from the possibility of the men being turned out of the union for disobeying some official mandate or other, the probability of these benefits being obtainable when they are wanted is incalculably reduced by the fact that trade

unions use their benefit funds for the purposes of industrial warfare. Even if this were not so, the members would have to depend for their prospective benefits on the money they had themselves paid in; whereas, in the case of the Great Eastern Railway, for example, Parliamentary powers have been obtained to place on a still more generous basis provident funds that were started when the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants was hardly heard of, the main additional feature being an orphan fund, to which the company contribute just as much as the men. It will be no difficult matter, in such circumstances as these, for a worker to decide which organisation offers him the better security; nor is it surprising that leaders of the trade union movement should regard the position with ill-concealed uneasiness.

A TRADE UNION REFORM MOVEMENT

THE first of the series of conclusions to which the present investigation into the condition of our industries has led is that there is abundant need for what may be called a trade union reform movement. In spite of all the abuses to which, as I have abundantly shown, it has led, the essential principle of trade unionism is good, and is still capable of fulfilling a function useful not only to labour but to capital as well, so long as it is conducted along wise and prudent lines. There are in existence trade unions of the old school against which not one word of reproach can be said; and their members look with disgust on the tactics of the newer unions, with their coercive policy, their restriction of output, and their systematic interference with the individual rights both of men and of masters.

As an illustration of the older and more tolerant unions we may take the case of the London Union of Journeymen Basketmakers. The exact

age of this union is not known, but its records go back to 1815, so that it counts as one of the oldest in the country; and, happily, it has never yet been brought up to date. It has, accordingly, retained some old-fashioned prejudices of which it is quite refreshing to hear. There are, it is true, recognised "society" houses in the trade, but the society hands would never think of raising any objection if the employer put on a non-society hand to work alongside of them. If they found, at the end of a week or so, that the newcomer was likely to stay, the suggestion would be made to him, in quite a friendly way, that he should join the society; but if he did not care to do so he would hear no more of the matter, and would be left free to do as he pleased. Any individual who sought to bring pressure to bear on him would be regarded with severe displeasure by his fellow-members. A society man, too, can work in a non-society shop if the employer pays the recognised rate of wages. As for interfering with any man's right to work as long and as hard as he pleases, such a thing is unknown among the trade union basketmakers. They do say that Sunday work shall not be done without a reasonable excuse, but that is all. The society does not limit the number of

apprentices, there is a frequent revision of the rules, any changes made being first approved by the members assembled at a special meeting, and the officials have no powers whatever beyond those directly delegated to them. The chief function of the society is to regulate wages and to administer out-of-work and sick benefit funds, and with such modest objects as these the members are quite content.

Had trade unions kept to strictly legitimate purposes of this type no one could have offered a word of objection to them. But some years ago the Socialists, who had previously despised the trade unionists and refused to have anything to do with them, thought that by capturing trade unionism they could advance their own propaganda, and since then they have made unremitting efforts in this direction. The Socialist leaders advised their members to join the different unions, or the different branches, and, as these members were men accustomed to a vigorous type of oratory, they soon came to the front, and pushed the older and more easy-going trade unionists to the background.

Then the men of the latter type took to absenting themselves almost entirely from their society meetings, and, though they grumbled in the shops, they left the actual management

of the unions partly to the Socialists, partly to the ne'er-do-wells and the indolent workers (who had a direct interest in keeping down both the individual output and the total number in the trade), and very largely in the hands of the officials, between whom and the two classes referred to there soon grew up a community of interest.

It is mainly in these directions that the decadence of the British trade union as a useful institution has been brought about, and that the abuses dealt with in these pages have crept in. So it is that unionists who really have the welfare of trade unionism at heart should not be content merely with reproaching those who point out these abuses, but should exert themselves to secure the reform of the institution whose well-being they have at heart.

In this respect one cannot too often re-echo the declaration of the Sheffield manufacturer—that "if we are to have trade unions, the best men in the trade should take a more active share in their management." If this were done, the reform movement here recommended could be the more readily started within the unions themselves; and it should be followed up by efforts from both the inside and the outside to enlighten those among the trade unionists who

are disposed to be led astray by economic fallacies which are injurious alike to their welfare as workers and to their character as men, while being, also, highly detrimental to the well-being of the country. The Socialist propaganda must be met by an equally active anti-Socialist propaganda, and those who would preserve trade unionism, with all its possibilities for good, from the reproaches of employers and the scorn of honest men and women, must see that the abuses which have warranted these reproaches and this scorn are wiped out without further delay. Trade unionism itself is in a state of crisis at the present moment, no less than British industry, and if it is to be saved its defence must be conducted by the active personal efforts of the workers themselves, and not left to the moral reflections of fireside economists.

THE EMPLOYERS' POLICY OF SELF-DEFENCE

THERE is the greater reason why the trade unionists should set their house in order, inasmuch as employers of labour are not likely to be wholly content with appealing to their better nature or their common sense, or with the uncertain effects of a movement to promote their higher education in labour questions. So far as the present series of inquiries shows, employers are quite willing to let these things have a fair chance; but, at the same time, they are keenly on the look-out for adopting every possible labour-saving machine which will allow of their overcoming trade union restrictions by employing unskilled non-union labour, at the same time that such machinery allows of an increased output at a decreased cost of production. This is the employers' policy of self-defence. This is the reply which, wherever they can, they are making to the enforcement of unyielding, unreasonable, and oppressive

trade union rules in complete disaccord with the necessities of our present economic situation. In every direction one hears of employers who, with wits sharpened by difficulties, and determination made keener by opposition, are looking to improved machinery as the one thing likely to give greater freedom to themselves and greater prosperity to the trade in which they are concerned. In some instances there will certainly be a displacement of labour; in others there will be an increased demand for labour because of the expansion of business, but it will be, in the main, for such labour as will not come under the domination of trade union officials. Various illustrations of what is being done in these directions have already been given; but, as a further example of the tendencies of the day, it may be mentioned that the most exquisite engravings for type-founding and other purposes are now being produced by processes which, from the moment the artist has completed the original design, are purely mechanical, the actual workers being men formerly working as ostlers, omnibus drivers, or in other such capacities.

So it is that improved machinery is regarded as one of the greatest factors in the industrial position of to-day. Yet, even with the use

of such machinery, it will be difficult enough, employers say, to fight, not only against the prejudices of workers, but also against hostile tariffs and the "surplus" systems of the United States and Germany. It is hoped, however, the workers themselves will see that, quite apart from any question of trade union restrictions, it will be useless to fight against the adoption and also against the efficient working of just such machinery as our foreign competitors are using, if British industries are to hold their own.

At the same time there will be a better chance of the employers winning the workers over to their side, and persuading them to get the best results out of the improved machinery, if they themselves do more in the way of enabling the workers to share in the pecuniary advantages derived therefrom. Whether such additional incentive should be offered by means of an increased wage, by the profit-sharing system, by the American premium system, or by any other method, would depend on circumstances; but the one thing to aim at would be to let the men see that they were getting a direct benefit from the better economic results. There is, of course, the possibility that some men might still be content with such wage as they had before, and not rise to the same standard

of zeal and aspiration as the American workmen do; but the vast majority would probably avail themselves of the chance to improve their position, if they were perfectly free so to do.

INDUSTRIAL TRAINING

HOWEVER great and however widespread may be that resort to improved mechanical appliances to which reference has already been made, there will still be need for a certain proportion of skilled labour; and there is a keen conviction on the part of employers that some really efficient system of industrial training is needed to meet the breakdown of the apprenticeship system. Boys are said to start ill-equipped in the first instance, for the Board School system of teaching as a prelude to factory life is spoken of slightingly, and the average London boy, especially, is declared to be lacking in discipline in respect to his superiors and in willingness to apply himself to any settled work sufficiently long to become master of it. There are some employers who look with almost longing eyes to the training that follows from the Continental system of conscription as a means, at least, of inculcating obedience to orders; and others profess to get their best lads from those who

have been trained in such institutions as Dr. Barnardo's homes. But the difficulty in the moral elevation of the working boy is one yet to be surmounted. In regard to his being fitted for skilled industries there is a feeling that this will best be met by employers taking the matter up themselves, and providing a practical training, with the help of their foremen, managers, or other competent persons, rather than depending on the theoretical teaching given at ordinary science or technical classes. That the trade union officials would oppose any such movement on the ground that it would "flood the labour market" is a matter of course, but some such action will have to be taken if we are to hold our own in competition with foreign countries.

Coupled with the provision of better training for skilled labour, it is felt by employers that parents should forgo the false pride that prompts them to keep their sons out of industries which offer lucrative positions in life, in order to put them into genteel clerkships where they will get little more than a starvation wage.

EMPLOYERS' COMBINATIONS

FAILING other and more pacific methods of overcoming the restrictive tactics of the more aggressive among the trade unions, there will still be open to employers the policy of forming powerful associations and federations among themselves. Much benefit might have been gained in the past from a general adoption of this policy; and it is possible that the glass trades and the lighter Sheffield trades, for instance, would not have been in their present unsatisfactory condition if there had been cohesion among the employers, leading them to make a united and determined stand against the conditions that hampered them so greatly. In many quarters the formation of powerful combinations among employers is advocated as the only effectual means of holding in check the overbearing type of trade union leader.

If, it is said, the great fight in the engineering trade had not taken place, the pretensions of such individuals would by this time have become

so great that many a British industry would have been completely crippled. "The engineering dispute," declared one large employer of labour, "was the Waterloo of British capitalists. If there is to be any more trouble, let us all join together and have a still bigger fight, and then we shall settle the question once for all, by establishing the right of freedom of contract between master and man without the incessant interference and the incessant attempts at domination on the part of trade union officials."

Large combinations on the part of employers are often regarded as akin to trade unions among the men. In point of fact they must be looked at from a different standpoint. In most of the trade unions the power is exercised by the officials, and the members have practically no voice in the management. In the employers' association or federation the members are supreme, their council is a real governing body, and the officials simply carry out the instructions they receive. Thus we have the curious result that a capitalists' combination is a democracy, while a trade union is an oligarchy, if not sometimes an autocracy. Then, again, a large federation of employers can be trusted to do the right thing, because it represents employers of all classes and all shades of opinion. The small

master inclined to small ideas must work in harmony with large masters of broader views. Such a body will generally be disposed to do what is just and fair towards the workers without the intervention of a trade union; and this is a further reason for suggesting that there is no longer the same necessity for trade unions of the more active type that there may have been in former days. In any case, there is greater certainty of the workers' getting fair treatment from a federated body than from a scattered group of individual employers. The federated body can also do for the worker what the individual employer could hardly attempt. If, for instance, a small shipowner should lose one or two ships he may be ruined, and find it impossible to do anything for the families of his seamen; whereas, if he were a member of a powerful combination, relief would be given out of a general fund. In the same way there is much greater facility afforded for the establishment of benefit and other funds on a comprehensive, generous, and really sound basis.

And this consideration leads to the further suggestion—that there should be a more general creation of such funds, with the view of bringing about a closer tie, a more cordial relationship, and a greater community of interest between

master and man. More especially should employers assure to their foremen benefits, in the way of sick allowance, superannuation, or life insurance, fully equal to what they are likely to get from the trade unions, and so leave them no reason for remaining in the anomalous position they too often occupy.

TRADE UNION PROVIDENT FUNDS

LEGISLATION is certainly required to ensure that all trade unions, and especially those having provident funds, shall be registered, and that such provident funds shall not be utilised for strike purposes. The Legislature should also see that a working man who has paid into the provident funds of his union for a term of years, and is depending on those funds for an old-age pension, for sickness, or as a life insurance, is not to be deprived of any of these benefits by being arbitrarily expelled from his union simply because he has acted against the wishes of the executive in regard to some purely industrial question. It is in this power of expulsion, with consequent loss of benefits for which a man may have been paying for ten, twenty, or thirty years, that the great hold exercised by the more autocratic of the officials over the members of a trade union mainly consists. It deprives the men, too, of all freedom of action, however clearly they may see

that it would be to their own advantage and to that of the trade they are in to agree to the improved methods and conditions desired by their employers.

Each of these reforms in regard to trade union funds would, no doubt, be strenuously opposed by the labour leaders; but each would be only an act of justice to the rank and file of the members. The whole position of trade union funds is, indeed, one that calls for serious inquiry, if not for thorough-going reform. There is a certain trade union concerning whose despotic action in expelling a member, and depriving him of all prospective superannuation and other benefits, the opinion of eminent counsel was taken. Counsel found that not only had the member in question no legal redress, but, although the union had over £50,000 accumulated funds, it would be quite lawful, under the rules of this particular society, for the officials to call a meeting of the members, to expel from the society all those who did not attend, and to go on holding such meetings, with like procedure, until there were left in the union only a mere handful of individuals, who could then distribute the funds between them. It might, therefore, reasonably be suggested that, if the opportunity should present

itself, Parliament should be invited to bestow some attention to the subject of trade unions and their provident funds, and take action thereon with the view of declaring that where funds have been paid into a trade organisation for purely beneficent purposes they shall not be applied to any other; though even then the members would still have to run the risk of being suddenly excluded from the benefits for which they had paid, unless provision were made, also, against such a possibility as this.

THE BOARD OF TRADE AND ITS LABOUR DEPARTMENT

THE final suggestion to be made is whether the time has not arrived for some practical step to be taken to secure from the employing classes in this country a greater degree of confidence in the Board of Trade and its Labour Department. It is not too much to say that at the present moment such confidence is so small as to be almost non-existent. Official proof of this fact is given by the recent report showing the very little advantage which has been taken of the Conciliation Act, 1896. Under this Act the Board of Trade was formally authorised to inquire into any dispute that arose, or threatened to arise, between employers and employed, to take steps to promote a conference between them, and to appoint a conciliator on the application of either side, or an arbitrator on the application of both sides. The Act came into operation in August, 1896. Between that date and June, 1901, there were

3,868 labour disputes; but of these only 113 were dealt with under the Act. For the two years ended June, 1901, the total was 46.

Conversation with a large number of employers and managers of industrial enterprises confirms the impression conveyed by these figures—that there is a widespread reluctance to entrust the settlement of labour troubles to the Board of Trade. It is true that in the Birmingham brass trades there was a feeling of complete satisfaction on the part of the employers with the award of the arbitrator appointed by the Board in regard to those particular trades. But elsewhere there has been much reluctance to make what seemed to be regarded as a risky experiment in inviting the aid of State officials who were thought to have a distinct bias in favour of trade unionism.

Against the Labour Department of the Board of Trade I found the prejudice to be especially keen. "We do not doubt the integrity of the leading officials," said the manager of one very large industrial concern, "but we cannot fail to see that they look at labour questions through trade union spectacles." "We keep clear of the Board of Trade and the Labour Department altogether," said another. "What is wanted there is to have

a body of men of judicial minds, who have leanings neither to employers nor to employed, and not men who are steeped in trade unionism." One influential employer described the Labour Department as "something to be held at arm's length"; another declared, "I would rather give up business than allow a Board of Trade official to come between me and my men"; still another said, "You can hardly expect that we should go before an arbitrator appointed by a body deriving its information from trade union officials"; while a Sheffield employer writes, "The lack of confidence felt by employers here in the Board of Trade is very strong and very general, so much so that no case of the Board of Trade being brought upon the scene has ever come under my notice." In the railway world it is declared that there is quite as much need for railway companies to combine against the "meddlesome interference" of the Board of Trade—if British railways are to be worked at a profit at all—as there is for them to combine against any aggressive action on the part of the trade unions.

The outcome of this state of things is not only the small number of applications made to the Board of Trade under the Conciliation

Act, but a widespread reluctance on the part of employers to give any information whatever to the Labour Department. There are employers who have systematically returned with the following endorsement the "forms" sent to them by that department: "Decline to report. Have no confidence in the Labour Department of the Board of Trade as at present constituted." Some firms regard this endorsement as so much a matter of routine that they are even said to make it with the help of a rubber stamp!

In the course of a speech to a deputation from the Trade Union Congress which waited on him at the Board of Trade in December, 1898, Mr. Ritchie referred to himself as "the head of the great trading department of the country, which was also charged with the interests of labour"; and the complaint made against that department is that it shows too pronounced a leaning towards the interests, not alone of labour—as distinct from those of capital—but of trade union labour. Sir Francis Hopwood, the Permanent Secretary of the Board of Trade, is regarded as having shown this leaning in his report on the Taff Vale dispute, wherein he stated that he was opposed to the sending away of the free-labour men

"summarily," but added: "I had great difficulty in getting the principle of taking all back admitted by the company, who flatly refused to reduce the two months to a shorter time." Why the influence of Board of Trade officials should be brought to bear at all on a company to get rid of non-union men who have helped them out of a difficulty, and to take on again in their place the men who have broken their contract, is not quite clear. Then, considering that the Chief Labour Correspondent of the Labour Department was formerly general secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, and that one of the other three labour correspondents is the late general secretary of the London Society of Compositors, it would be only in accordance with the weakness of human nature if they should have retained a tender regard for trade union principles.

As for the body of "local" correspondents of the Labour Department, thirty or so in number, the whole of them, with a single exception, according to a list recently published, are trade union officials in the districts they represent. It is from individuals of this stamp that the Labour Department gets its inspiration as to the industrial conditions of the country —and, presumably, the Labour Department

inspires the Board of Trade, and the Board of Trade inspires the Government.

The sort of information supplied by these "local" correspondents to the *Labour Gazette*, in which their contributions, after having undergone a careful pruning and sub-editing, are duly published, may be judged from a single illustration. Readers of these articles will remember the dismal story told of the harm done to the flint-glass industry through trade union tactics. When one looks in the *Labour Gazette* for November, 1901, for information on the subject, one finds the following paragraph, contributed by the Wolverhampton correspondent:

Glass Trades.—Employment in all branches of the flint-glass trade is quiet.

Quiet, indeed! The flint-glass trade may well be quiet, in view of the conditions under which it is carried on, as already recorded; but it is quite certain that the gentleman who supplied the above item would not have dared to say why the trade is quiet, and it may be doubted whether, if he had, the editor of the *Labour Gazette* would have put it in.

The local correspondents are paid salaries ranging from £15 to £30 a year; but such is the prestige they acquire among their fellows

by virtue of the position they hold that, as one employer of labour declared, "it would pay them to take the appointment at 30*s.* the year, or even 30 pence." As it is, their salary from the Board of Trade, added to their salary as trade union officials, should enable them to live without following their own trade at all.

The special opportunities, too, that may be opened out to them as agents of the Government are indicated by the following incident. In a certain provincial town where unionism is an active force, it is not unusual for the employers to make private arrangements with their men, without submitting the matter for the previous approval of the trade union. A local trade union secretary had reason to believe that a particular employer had just concluded an arrangement of this sort, and he applied, as secretary, for information on the point. It was refused. But it so happened that the secretary in question was the local correspondent of the Board of Trade Labour Department; and shortly afterwards the employer received from London a request, sent to him in the name of the Commissioner for Labour, for the very information which he had previously refused to disclose to the local trade union secretary! The employer took no notice of the request.

A fortnight later he received another communication from the Labour Department, announcing that it would be "much obliged" if he would reply to the previous inquiry, and enclosing a copy of the schedule previously sent, "in case the original has been mislaid." The employer began to be uneasy. The first document he had received bore the words:

> These statistics are collected and published by the Department in pursuance of the following resolution adopted by the House of Commons on the 2nd March, 1886: "That, in the opinion of this House, immediate steps should be taken to ensure in this country the full and accurate collection of labour statistics."

He had visions of possible trouble with the aforesaid House of Commons; but he was most reluctant to give the information asked for, believing, as he did, that in some way or other it might get into the hands of the local secretary, and be used to his own detriment. In his dilemma he consulted a competent authority in London as to his responsibilities in the matter, and he was so far reassured that the answer eventually sent was as follows: "Referring to yours of ——, we prefer not to supply information with regard to our trade arrangements."

Then there was a certain local correspondent of the Labour Department who was "in-

structed" to visit the district of Bethesda for the purpose of making inquiries as to the dispute at the Penrhyn quarries and reporting thereon to the Board of Trade. A Carnarvon paper attacked him on the ground that he could not speak Welsh; and in the course of a letter he sent in reply he wrote:

> There is no one that sympathises more than I with the Bethesda men, and this I do say as a Welshman, having lived all my life in Wales. I may also add that I have, as a working man, done as much for Welsh nationalism as any man in Wales. I received my appointment through the recommendation of several Welsh members, well-known Radicals. As to labour questions, I have been a trade unionist all my life—that is, since I commenced work; I have taken a leading part for more than twenty years, and have had a large experience of strikes of all kinds. I was president of the Miners' Federation for some years, and have on many occasions presided over meetings conducted wholly in Welsh. Only the other day I was chairman of a Welsh meeting at Cefnmawr for the purpose of raising subscriptions on behalf of the Bethesda men.

And this is the sort of person who was supposed to be competent to make an impartial report to the Government on so important a matter as the Penrhyn dispute! Altogether it is not surprising that there should be so many employers of labour who consider that the officials of the Board of Trade and its Labour

Department "look at labour questions through trade union spectacles," and avoid them accordingly.

So there is a strong feeling on the part of employers that, even if the Labour Department be not abolished altogether—a course which many of them recommend—it should at least be reorganised, so that it may be freed from its present trade union bias and converted into an impartial and trustworthy organisation, composed of men of judicial minds, with a leaning neither to employers nor to employed, but acting with strict justice towards both. In any case the "local correspondents" should be got rid of. They are not recognised by the employers, many of whom would not allow them even to come into their offices; the information they get is one-sided, and the local influence they exercise is often most pernicious. If local information is wanted it could be much better collected by local journalists, who would be able to obtain news from both sides and could be trusted to supply it with impartiality. The only possible objection to this course is that, if it were adopted, politicians would not have the same chance of cultivating the working-class vote.

The creation of the Labour Department in its

present form in the early part of 1893 was the outcome of an attempt on the part of Mr. Mundella to anticipate any action that might be taken on these lines as the result of the recommendations of the Labour Commission which was then still sitting. This may seem an ungenerous thing to say, but it is warranted by facts, and the statement is made, not with any desire to prejudice Mr. Mundella's memory, but in order to show that there need be less scruple about reforming the department now. Though the trade unionists, too, may be said to have "captured" the department, it is only fair to them to say that they had nothing to do with bringing it into existence. Thus, in an article published in *The Times* of January 13, 1893, giving the first public intimation that the Labour Department was about to be formed, the following passage occurs:

> This action on the part of the Government is being taken entirely on their own initiative, without any pressure, gentle or otherwise, having been brought to bear upon them by the Labour party, whether within or outside their own circle, though the creation of a Labour Department has long been a cherished idea of that party.

It was, therefore, no fault of the trade unionists (on whose heads so many sins have

already been laid!) that Mr. Mundella organised the Labour Department without awaiting the practical suggestions that might be expected to result from the sittings of the Labour Commission. When the commissioners issued their report they told how—

> Dr. Elgin Gould, the official of the Federal Labour Department of the United States, who has collected labour statistics for his Government in many countries, and has had exceptional opportunities of comparison, gave it as his opinion that Great Britain no longer occupied the leading position which was once held in this respect, and could regain it only by following the example of other countries, and establishing a strong bureau of skilled investigators . . . . There appears to be in America, the colonies, and European countries generally a tendency towards the development of institutions for the collection and examination, by skilled officials, of facts relating to industry and bearing on labour questions, and the presentation of them to the public. Dr. Gould was of opinion that a very great indirect effect was exercised by the work of his department, although it is one of a purely statistical character, through the diffusion of trustworthy information as to the conditions of industry, in promoting the peaceful solution of difficulties, and averting conflicts which might have been caused by ignorance and misunderstanding. He thought that it was most important that a Department of Labour Statistics should be kept free from all political influences and as separate as possible from any administrative functions, and that even to impose upon it duties connected with any conciliation or arbitration might cause it to be suspected of bias . . . . It would further appear that in the

United States the existence of a regular, strong, and expert organisation for collecting information has dispensed with the necessity of many inquiries by special commission or legislative committees, and the work, so far as it relates to the collection of information, has often been done in a more satisfactory manner. It has been suggested that in this country a similar department might in some cases undertake such inquiries on behalf of commissions or select committees.

In their "Recommendations" the Royal Commissioners said:

The department of the Board of Trade which deals with labour statistics has recently been reorganised and strengthened. Several of the suggestions which we should have desired to make with regard to the work of this department have been anticipated by the publication of the *Labour Gazette*, which is doing very useful work .... Without criticising the work done by the local correspondents of the Labour Department, we think that their services would hardly be available for those systematic inquiries into the conditions of industry for which there is an urgent and growing need in this country.

The Royal Commissioners went on to say that in these respects there was a deficiency which they thought should not be allowed to remain without a serious attempt to remedy it; and they suggested that a beginning should be made at once with "a staff of skilled investigators," whose work of investigation would be conducted on the spot. They proceeded:

We do not attempt to forecast in detail the inquiries which this staff should make, for as time goes on the department will learn from its own experience what inquiries are most urgently needed, and will select from these such as the resources at its disposal will enable it to conduct to the best advantage. It will, also, be guided by instructions and requests proceeding from the Legislature, various departments of Government, and Royal Commissioners. A great part of the work which is now done by temporary assistant commissioners could be done more efficiently, and much more economically, by persons with some special knowledge of the particular subject and of the methods most appropriate for dealing with it.

These extracts afford abundant food for reflection at the present time, and they suggest a variety of questions. Would it not, for instance, have been better if, instead of rushing Mr. Mundella's Labour Department into existence before the Labour Commission could report, a little more patience had been shown, and the department had been organised on the broader lines laid down by the Royal Commissioners? Can the Labour Department, as at present organised, be depended on to ensure "the diffusion of trustworthy information," to carry out the systematic inquiries for which there is still "an urgent and growing need," and to exercise the indirect benefits spoken of by Dr. Gould? Can it be said of our Labour Department that it is "free from all political

influences," and that there is nothing in its composition that "might cause it to be suspected of bias"? Could it be depended on, especially in such critical times as those through which our industries are passing, to give absolutely fair and unprejudiced guidance to the Legislature, or to various departments of the Government on industrial questions? Is there any real reason, apart from their influence over the Labour vote, why the trade unionists, who represent under two millions of the entire industrial population of this country, should have the controlling influence over a department which is presumably intended to promote the welfare of the whole land? And finally, has not the time arrived for the Labour Department to be transformed from a body whose chief function seems to be to provide posts for trade union officials, past or present, and to publish inadequate reports and dreary statistics of little or no practical utility, into a body which would perform a really valuable function and be regarded with confidence by all classes of the community?

Thus, in addition to all the other suggestions which have been made in the course of these pages, it may finally be most strongly urged that there are two things for which some

Member of Parliament should ask,—firstly, that a return should be prepared showing the lines on which industrial facts and statistics are collected in other countries; and secondly, that a small committee should be appointed to inquire into the present constitution of the Labour Department, and to obtain the views, not alone of trade unionists, but of employers of labour also, as to the best means that could be adopted to secure for it a greater degree of usefulness and public favour. There are many employers who say that, so long as politicians in general and members of the Government in particular show so great a leaning towards the labour vote, they have no great faith in any Labour Department at all, though they might be reconciled to it if it were reconstructed on a more impartial and practical basis—that is to say, on such lines as might be suggested alike by the report of the Royal Labour Commission, by the information obtained as to what is being done elsewhere, and by the actual requirements of present-day economic conditions. With such reconstruction, too, there should be a change of name. "Labour" Department may well convey the idea of a department "charged with the interests of labour," and of labour exclusively. What is wanted is a department which will recognise

and secure the confidence of the whole of the varied interests on which the welfare of our industries depends; and such recognition would be better shown if, should the proposed reconstruction be brought about, the name "Labour Department" were dropped altogether, and that of "Industrial Intelligence Department" adopted instead.

INDEX

AMALGAMATED SOCIETY OF LITHOGRAPHIC PRINTERS, 160
" " RAILWAY SERVANTS, 71, 202
AMERICAN COMPETITION: boot and shoe trade, 66, 67; brass trades, 109, 112, 119; Sheffield trades, 130; saw trade, 138; edge tools, 139, 140; file-making, 140; iron and steel trade, 172
AMERICAN LABOUR STATISTICS, how organised, 232
" METHODS: the working of machinery, 51, 172; English expert's views, 185-191
AMERICAN PREMIUM SYSTEM, 187, 210
APPRENTICES, Restriction of: Yorkshire glass bottle trade, 84; black bottle trade, 89; flint-glass trade, 100, 107; Sheffield trades, 128, 129, 132, 134
APPRENTICESHIP SYSTEM, Breakdown of, 126-128
ASSOCIATED SOCIETY OF CARPENTERS AND JOINERS, 35

BAILEY, MESSRS. J. & W. O., affected by glass trade dispute, 81, 82
BELGIUM: Belgian makers and plate-glass bevelling trade, 80, 82; strike in Belgian glass trade, 83; schools of gunmaking, 122; competition in gun trade, 124
BENEFIT FUNDS (organised by employers): for railway workers, 74, 75, 202; attitude of trade union officials, 201
BENEFIT FUNDS (trade union): constitute a "hold" on trade union members, 38, 39, 103; used for industrial warfare, 202; a useful weapon for officials, 218; need for guarantees, 219
BIRMINGHAM BRASS TRADES: disregard for economic situation, 109; what foreign competition means, 109-111; demands of men's union, 111; arbitration thereon, 112; the trades saved, 113
BIRMINGHAM SMALL ARMS COMPANY, 121

BIRMINGHAM TINPLATE TRADE: reduced cost of production necessary, 114; male and female labour, 115; union demands and their result, 116-119.

BOILERMAKING AND SHIPBUILDING: coercion of foremen, 50; supremacy of the worker, 51; scruples against machinery, 51; delays in executing orders, 52; policy of men's union, 53; contrast with Germany, 54; Boilermakers' Society's rules, 55-58; shipbuilding troubles, 178

BOOT & SHOE TRADES: checks on individual energy, 65, 66; comparisons with United States, 66, 67; restriction of out-put, 67-70; minimum wage, 68, 70

BOYS: training of, 76-78, 93, 122-125, 146, 212; troubles caused by boys, 183

BRICKLAYING: past and present, 28, 29; position of foreman, 30; "limit" of London County Council bricklayers, 31; London School Board work, 31; what bricklaying costs, 32, 33; intimidation, 34

BRITANNIA-METAL SMITHS, 131

BRITANNIA-METAL SMITHS' PROVIDENT SOCIETY, 131-134

BUILDING TRADES: how influenced by "go easy" practices, 28-35; disputes between unions, 36; "moral suasion" against employers, 37; effect of present conditions on house property, 40-42

"CA' CANNY": origin of phrase, 22; application, 23; to absorb the unemployed, 24; eating the heart out of British industry, 25; outcome of trade unionism and advanced Socialism, 27; whither "go easy" is leading, 192–194

COAL TRADE: miners and non-unionists, 175

COMBINATIONS (Employers'): practical utility of, 214; employers' and workmen's combinations compared, 215

COMMUNITY OF INTEREST, 145, 216

CUTLERY TRADES, 135

DALE, SIR DAVID, arbitrates in Birmingham brass trades, 112

DELAVEL, LORD, black bottle trade introduced by, 88

DOCKERS' UNION, 195, 199

EDGE TOOLS, 139

ENGINEERING TRADES: the great dispute, and after, 43, 44; employment of non-unionists, 45; competition from abroad, 46, 47; hopes for improvement, 48; use of machinery, 172, 175

FILE-MAKING, 140
FOREMEN, POSITION OF, 30, 50, 158, 217
FRANCE: edge tool making, 140; iron pipes from, 174
FRIENDLY SOCIETY OF IRONFOUNDERS, 59
FURNITURE TRADES: past and present, 162, 163; increased use of machinery, 163; increased need for labour, 165; factories succeed garrets, 165

GAS-WORKERS' UNION, 62
GERMANY: engineering firms undersold by Germans, 44, 47; position of German shipbuilders, 54; Germans and glass bottle trade, 86; black bottle trade introduced from Germany, 88; simpler processes there, 89; Germans capture the market, 90; German workers brought to North Woolwich, 90-93; flint-glass trade, 96; competition in brass trades, 109-112; tinplate trade, 116; gun-making, 122; Sheffield trades, 130, 136, 137; printing trades, 150, 160; gold-beating industry, 167-171
GLASS TRADES: plate-glass bevellers, 79-82; plate-glass and sheet-glass, 83; Yorkshire glass bottle trade, 84-87; black bottle trade, 88-93; flint-glass trade, 94-108
GOLD-BEATING INDUSTRY: incursions of German industry, 167; difference between German and British article, 168; German small masters, 169; British public to blame, 170
GOULD, DR. ELGIN: views on labour statistics, 232
GUNMAKERS (Birmingham): dearth of efficient hands, 121; training of lads, 122-125
GUNMAKERS' UNION, 123

HOUSE PROPERTY: how affected by building trade troubles, 40-42
HOLLAND, printing going to, 150
HULL DOCKS: under trade union rule, 195; action of shipowners and overthrow of Dockers' Union, 197; attempt to cause further trouble, 199-200

INCORPORATED FEDERATED ASSOCIATIONS OF BOOT AND SHOE MANUFACTURERS, 68
INTIMIDATION: building trades, 34; plate-glass bevellers, 79; flint-glass trade, 104; shipping trade, 196
IRONFOUNDING: district by-laws of Ironfounders' Society, 59, 60; objections to machinery, 60, 61

LABOUR DEPARTMENT OF BOARD OF TRADE: little advantage taken of Conciliation Act, 221; prejudices against department, 222-224; how constituted, 225; the local correspondents, 225-229; how the department was created, 230-232; the Labour Commission's recommendations, 233, 234; desirability of reconstruction, 236
LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL: their bricklayers' "limit," 31; effect of labour policy, 30, 31
LONDON MASTER BUILDERS' ASSOCIATION, 37
LONDON PLATE-GLASS TRADES ASSOCIATION, 79
LONDON SCHOOL BOARD, buildings for, 30, 31
LONDON SOCIETY OF COMPOSITORS, 154
LONDON SOCIETY OF LITHOGRAPHIC PRINTERS, 160
LONDON UNION OF JOURNEYMEN BASKETMAKERS, 203

MACHINERY: engineering trades, 44, 48, 172-175; shipbuilding, 51, 52; ironfounding, 60, 61; glass trades, 86; tinplate trades, 119; Sheffield trades, 130; cutlery, 136; razors, 137; saws, 138; edge tools, 139; files, 140; proposed further use, 143; printing trades, 151-161; furniture trades, 162-166; machinery in America, 190, 191; greater resort to machinery—the employers' policy of self-defence, 208-211
MINIMUM WAGE THEORY: view of boot and shoe manufacturers, 67-70; glass trades, 86; Birmingham brass trades, 111, 113; in the United States, 187
MOORE & NETTLEFOLD, MESSRS., 90
MUNDELLA, MR.: "Rushing" the Labour Department, 231

NATIONAL FLINT-GLASS MAKERS' SOCIETY, 94-108
NATIONAL PLATE-GLASS BEVELLERS' UNION, 79, 81
NATIONAL SOCIETY OF AMALGAMATED BRASS-WORKERS, 111
"NEW" UNIONISM, THE, 22
"NEWER" UNIONISM, THE, 22
NON-UNION LABOUR: position in building trades, 38; engineering trades, 45; gas-workers, 63, 64; Sheffield trades, 146; printing trades, 159; coal trade, 175

OPERATIVE BRICKLAYERS' SOCIETY, 36

PRINTING TRADES: reduction of output, 148; London distractions, 149; trade going to provinces and Continent, 150; "go easy," 151; use of machinery, 151-157; the general position, 157-159; lithographic colour printing, 160

RAILWAY WORKERS: the Amalgamated Society, 71; "go easy" in railway operation, 72; shorter hours and outside work, 73; wages question, 73, 74

RAZOR TRADE, 137

RESTRICTION OF OUTPUT: adopted by the "newer" unionism, 22; effect on British industry, 25; effect on workers, 27; building trades, 28; boilermaking, 51; boot and shoe trades, 65, 67-69; railways, 72; glass trades, 97; printing trades, 151; will not remedy industrial situation, 193

ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR, and their recommendations, 231-234

RULES OF TRADE UNIONS (Examples of): boilermakers, 55; ironfounders, 59; Britannia-metal smiths, 132, 133; Typographical Association, 155

SAW TRADE, 138

"SEAMEN'S CHRONICLE," 22, 26

SHEFFIELD TRADES: breakdown of apprenticeship system, 126; restriction of number of workers, 127; variety of unions, 128; fixing the rate of wages, 129; diversion of trade, 130, 131; Britannia-metal smiths, 131; silversmiths, 134; cutlery trades, 135; razor trade, 137; saw trade, 138; edge tools, 139; file-making, 140; future of the trades, 142-147

SHIPOWNERS: the Shipping Federation, 76

SILVERSMITHS, 134

SOCIALISM: its aspiration, 24; strengthening the propaganda, 25, 27; injuring industries, 192; attempted capture of trade unionism, 205

SOUTH METROPOLITAN GAS COMPANY: Labour troubles, 62; resort to non-union labour, 63; advantages of, 64

STEEL MELTERS' UNION, 172

SWEDEN: doors, etc., imported from, 35

TARIFFS, HOSTILE: effect on Sheffield trades, 126, 131

TINPLATE WORKERS' ASSOCIATION 115-120

TRADE UNIONS: effect of more aggressive type on the trade of the country, 21; the "new" and the "newer" unionisms, 22; the controlling influence, 145; variety of unions in a single works, 128, 176; aggressive action out of date, 198; utility of reasonably conducted trade unions, 198; essential principle good, 203; Socialist action and what it led to, 205; need for a trade union reform movement, 206

TYPOGRAPHICAL ASSOCIATION, 155

WORKMAN, ENGLISH, VIEWS ON: an engineering manager, 173, 174; an ironmaster, 181-184; an engineering expert, 189

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